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SONS OF STRENGTH

Historical Series

SONS OF STRENGTH

KANSAS

By

WILLIAM R. LIGHTON



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To
my three women-folks,
My Mother, my Wife and my little Daughter,
whose love has inspired all that is
good in me and in my work,
this story is solemnly
dedicated.

WILLIAM R. LIGHTON.

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SONS OF STRENGTH

CHAPTER I

I REALIZE MYSELF

ALTHOUGH I have often tried to find my way, through the weary maze of days, years and events, back to the time of my first awakening from the dream-sleep of babyhood, I have always brought up sharply at one place, as against a blank wall,—a wall which may be scaled only in imagination. But imagination is at the best illusory and unsatisfying.

When I first realized myself, I was sitting upon dusty grass, by the side of a dusty road. A pair of stubby and dusty bare legs showed below the hem of my torn and faded calico dress. The evening sky, drooping wearily over me, was of a dusty yellow hue. A dusty canvas-covered emigrant wagon was moving

wearily away along the road. The whole of the prospect seemed grimy and gritty, wind-blown, dull, desolate.

My calico lap was very small, and it held a scant crust of bread,—a crust so pitifully poor that it seemed designed to threaten rather than to appease the horrors of starvation. A lean brown dog limped painfully after the wagon, stopping once or twice to look back doubtfully at me. At last it turned, and shambled to where I sat, sniffing at me and licking my face with its moist tongue; then it set its nose against the bread which lay in my lap, gulped it up hungrily and ran away with it.

Things seemed to grow very big and solemn and lonesome as I sat watching the slow jolting progress of the wagon. It was an abrupt and strange awakening, past the grasp of my newly aroused understanding. I remember that I had a strong desire to follow the wagon, though my tired legs did not move. I felt that I owned some sort of kinship with it, or with what it held, or maybe with the lean horses or the dog;—I could not be clear upon that point. Surely there must be close relationship between the horses and

the dog and the wagon; for the horses were starved and ribby-looking; the dog was starved and ribby-looking; and the wagon looked equally poor and wretched, with its canvas skin hanging in loose folds upon its wooden ribs. Notwithstanding its appearance of abject poverty, my heart yearned toward it, and my loneliness grew greatly upon me, as the distance between us grew, until at last a misty veil dropped down before my eyes, through which I saw a vast misshapen spectre of a wagon, swelling and swelling; then the veil thickened, hiding the spectre altogether; and so it passed out of my life.

After a little while, when the mist was gone, I began to look about me, and then I found that my back was propped against a high brick wall. Some large trees were leaning over the wall, with their elbows upon the top, looking down at me in stately fashion, and shaking their heads, as though they were as much puzzled as I to know what to make of the matter. While I sat staring helplessly up at them, behind the wall a big bell began to beat slowly, and under its tone I heard the sound of children's voices—a

great many of them, all going at once. In the wall not far from me there was an iron gate. It was closed tightly, and had a strong lock upon it; but the iron plate was full of little round holes. I did what a sound-minded boy must do when he sees a hole which promises to lead anywhere;—I got up and set my eye against one of the peep-holes. What I saw was a fresh mystery.

The wall enclosed a large yard, and within it there stood a big giant of a brick house,—square-shouldered, solemn and fierce. Its shuttered windows were wide open and staring fixedly, like glowering eyes, never changing their expression of watchfulness. Its big front door was gaping wide open, too, like a huge hungry mouth, and into it were pouring two long rows of children, one row of boys and one of girls. All were dressed in the same way,—the boys in blue trousers, blue blouses and blue caps; the girls in blue petticoats, blue aprons and blue bonnets. I could not see the children's faces, but I thought that they must of course be blue too, and I was surprised when one of the boys turned a face as white as my own, only less grimy. Then I wondered whether they had

been born in long rows. They were certainly dressed by the row, laughing in rows, talking and walking in rows. The only detail in which they were not alike was in the matter of size; they were of all sizes, within the legitimate limits of childhood.

A man and a woman stood at either side of the door, stuffing and crowding the children into it, as though they were feeding long strings of sausages into the giant's maw. And he appeared never to have enough, but to be always yawning hungrily for more. But at last they were all inside, and the man and woman after them, and the giant closed his jaws grimly upon them.

The yard which surrounded the house was darkened by the shadows of great trees. The grass beneath the trees seemed fresher and softer than that in the road, and I wished that I might get inside, to lie down; but the gate would not open, though I put my fingers through the holes and pulled and shook with all my strength. Then I wished that the children would come out again and play, so that I need not be so lonely; but the house-giant would not give them up. I grew very wretched, without quite knowing what to do

about it, unless it might be to cry. So, being only a little fellow, I lay down upon the dusty grass, laid my face in the hollow of my arm, and cried. When the tears and the sobs were done, I got up and once more put my eye at its old place. The light was fading quickly from the sky, and the house-giant had shut its many eyes and seemed to be sleeping soundly. Everything appeared to be growing sleepy. I thought that the very sky was going shut, as the glow passed out of it, and the sound of the air in the leafy trees was as though the night was snoring, drawing big deep breaths. All this made me grow sleepy, too, besides being cold and hungry. When a boy is cold, hungry and sleepy all at once, sleep mercifully gets the best of it; and so it was with me.

When I awoke, it was to still greater mystery. I lay in one of a long row of little white beds which were ranged along the wall of a big room. There was another row against the opposite wall, and every bed held a boy, his head sticking out of the covers, his eyes shut and his lips parted. When I saw the straight rows of beds, with the straight rows of heads upon the straight rows of pil-

lows, I guessed at once that the house-giant had been prowling around in the night, had found me lying upon the ground outside the fence, and had swallowed me.

The room was very quiet, save for some sleepy sounds sifting in through the slats of the closed shutters over the windows. It was not yet full daylight, and I could only see the room indistinctly, and a part at a time. My bed was very soft and warm, and I lay quite still, partly because of the sheer comfort of lying still, and partly because I could not guess what might happen if I should move or make a noise. Then I dropped back into a deep sea of delicious comforting sleep, while daylight broadened.

At last I came awake with a start, hearing again many children's voices, making a great clatter. Very cautiously I peeped from the shelter of the bed-clothing, and saw that the room was alive and swarming with boys, who were struggling, squirming and wriggling into their blue clothes. I was reassured by seeing that the bare legs were all hopping and skipping merrily, and the faces all smiling. A man stood in the middle of the room, looking on, now and then helping some of the lit-

tlest boys with their buttons or their shoes. He was the man whom I had seen the night before, when he stood by the doorway. He was very broad across the shoulders, very tall, and he had a brown beard which hid most of his face and covered his breast. Another vague sense of comfort came to me when I saw that no matter how much noise the boys made, this man did not try to make them be still. He laughed with them; but louder than they could laugh, his voice being so much bigger. No one seemed to be afraid of him. Some of the little boys, while he was putting on their clothes, hugged him around the neck, and kissed the small bare places which his beard had left under his eyes. I liked him from that time, and was sorry that there was not a long row of him, too.

Slowly I came from beneath the bed-clothes and sat up. When the man saw me, he came and sat upon the edge of my bed, taking both of my small hands into one of his great ones. Behind the beard, the big voice began asking me a great many questions, none of which could I answer, though I tried hard. I could not even tell him my,

name,—if, indeed, I had one. But he patted me kindly upon the head, and said it didn't matter. He had gentle, soft eyes, which seemed, even more than the rest of him, to belong to the place; for they were blue.

I was taken out of bed and put into one of a row of white tubs, full of warm water, and after that into a suit of blue clothes; which only made me more uncertain than ever as to who I might be, and where I came from. At once I seemed to pass away from my old self, whatever that may have been, and to become lost in my new identity. But before I had time to wonder very much about it, the man took me into another room, larger than that which held the beds; and there were the rows of children once more, sitting at long tables, with long rows of bowls before them, filled with bread and milk. And I sat down, too, and began to eat bread and milk with all my might, forgetting everything else,—even forgetting to be puzzled about it, until my bowl was empty, to the last drop and crumb, and I sat up straight in my chair, rubbing my lips dry upon the back of my hand.

CHAPTER II

I REALIZE A FEW OTHER THINGS

THEN came a long row of days, all alike, each whirling up, whirling through its brief pirouette, and whirling mysteriously away,—all going in such mad haste that I could not separate one from the others, nor remember each one distinctly, but could only gasp and catch my breath, trying to grow accustomed to the strangeness of it. They were notable days,—days which held plenty to eat, plenty of play with plenty of play-fellows, and a soft bed at night. They were days in which I first laid hold of the tail of that strange beast, Experience, and had it turn and bite me vengefully. They were days in which I took my first lessons in loving and hating,—lessons not got from books, but from sharp encounter of eye and tongue. Philosophers have made fast rules for love and hate; yet when they themselves take to loving and hating, they forget their rules and go back to ruleless impulse. So in my baby

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way I was as well off as the deepest philosopher when I loved impulsively and strongly, and hated with equal impulsiveness and strength.

Although it seemed to break an otherwise unbroken rule in my new life, I could not love and hate by the row; at least, I could not follow the arrangement as I found it, but had to form other rows, one to be loved and the other to be hated. And the row of those I loved was very much the shorter.

At its head stood the big-bearded man. His beard was so very large, hiding so much of him, that when he spoke, with that thunderous roll in his voice, he seemed to be an ogre roaring from a hiding place behind a thick hedge. But what he said was so gentle, and the blue eyes looking through their peep-holes in the hedge were so gentle, and the touch of the broad hand was so gentle that there was no fearing him. I loved him wholly, devotedly, with no other feeling mixed with the love.

Near him in this row stood the woman whom I had seen on that first night. She was large, too; but while the man was tall, her bigness was all the other way. She was

of an amorphous figure, and pudgy, with most imposing blue yarn ankles, always in evidence, and a round throat full of deep rolls and wrinkles. Her sleeves she kept rolled high upon her goodly arms. She had a big soft breast, where a boy might pillow his head and be comforted when things went wrong with him. She was always laughing. I never saw her lips in any shape save for a laugh, except when they were puckered up to kiss some one; and then a laugh was sure to come tumbling over the heels of the kiss, tripping itself up. Even the deep dimples in her bare elbows seemed to laugh at us, when her back was turned. In the mornings when I first awoke I would hear her laughing gaily in the hallways; then I would begin the new day happily.

There were many children in the great house. I do not know when or how the knowledge came to me, for it came a very little at a time; but by and by I knew that this was a home for such children as had no other; though how or why they had none was beyond my understanding, and perhaps even beyond my desire to know. It took me a long time to learn about the names of the

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children. In the economy of the asylum, we were all marked with white numbers upon our blue sleeves. After a while I found that there was a big book kept by the man, in which our numbers were written, together with such other things as were known about us. The record for me was simply: "No. 93. Foundling. Boy. Age, about 4. Entered October 2nd, 1837. Found at Asylum gate."

But numbers were not enough when we children were together; so we had names for one another. Some had brought their names with them when they came to the place. Where they had got them was another puzzle. Those who were nameless upon their advent were promptly christened when they took their places upon the playground under the trees. By slow degrees I grew to understand that my name was Pokey Upjack. I remember that I had a certain slow way of doing everything,—a slow way of eating, a slow way of getting angry, and a slow way of standing apart, while play was going on, until it was all a mad whirl of excitement, when I would be sucked irresistibly into the maelstrom. So it was, doubtless, that I came

to be called Pokey. Whence or why the Upjack I never knew.

There was one of the boys, a little larger than I, whose name was Blinky Meade. He was a strange little fellow, set apart from the others by his love of solitude. Naturally enough, he and I drew together more and more closely as time passed. I do not understand why he was called "Blinky," for his big brown eyes were always solemnly wide open. His lips were very red and full, and his face was covered over with freckles,—freckles so large that he seemed a brindled boy. When I had known him for a long time, as I then reckoned time, I asked him how the freckles came to be there, and believed him when he told me that an angel had cried over him one night, when he was lying awake in the dark, full of the wonder of loneliness, and that the brown patches were marks which the tears had left, so that the angel might know him again in the daylight, and take care of him. He told me many other things about himself,—for he never willingly talked of anyone but himself;—and I, with confidence still fresh, believed him in all things, and was glad that so re-

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markable a boy could be a friend of mine and eat my apples, when I had any to be eaten. I do not know what he would do with his own apples. When the rest of us had them, as sometimes happened, he would sit by my side, his hands empty and his brown eyes wistful, until I would give him mine. He never asked for it; but when it was offered he would take it and eat it gravely, and between bites he would tell me things.

“This here ain’t my home,” he once said, as we sat together beneath a large maple in one corner of the yard, he with my freshly-bitten russet-skinned fruit poised in his hand. “I don’t live here. I’m only stayin’ here till my folks come for me.” Then another meditative bite, chewed and swallowed while his eyes were fixed upon the waving leaves. “Where my home is, there’s a big house,—bigger’n this; lots, with all my folks in it, an’ angels, an’ everything, an’ lots to eat. An’ God, he comes to see us sometimes, an’ eats dinner with us. This here ain’t my home.” By the time he had finished another mouthful, I ventured to ask why he should stay in the asylum, with so grand a home awaiting him. “Why,” he said read-

ily; "God, he sent me here to look after you. What'd you do here without me, Pokey?" Which was not to be answered lightly. And another time I came upon him when he stood alone in the concealment of our favorite resting place under the corner maple. He was eating a piece of bread and butter, and I incontinently asked him for a bite. "Of this?" he asked, holding up his bread with a show of vast reverence. "Why, Pokey, you couldn't bite this. There ain't nobody could bite this, but me an' God." Then he ate what remained, slowly and with much enjoyment. I tell these things to show what a strange boy he was; but I did not doubt him then.

Adjoining the asylum yard,—indeed, a part of it, enclosed within an iron railing, was a little graveyard. Great trees grew there, too, and made it seem a pleasant place, despite the solemn presence of death. There were buried those of the asylum children who had died within the walls. The tiny graves lay in straight rows, each marked by a small white headboard standing upright, with the dead child's asylum number painted upon it in square black figures. Even in

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death they did not escape the rows and the numbers. The gate which led into the enclosure came open easily, and anyone who wished might go in. And being sometimes disinclined to take part in the children's games, I got in the habit of slipping off alone to the graveyard, where I would walk up and down in the narrow lanes between the headboards, rubbing the dust from them with my sleeve, and wondering about the children who were buried there. Although I loved and reverenced Blinky Meade as some one very much above me, and knew that I could not pretend to the social distinctions which were his, as an intimate of God and the angels, I could not be quite reconciled to the hard fact that there were no folks whom I could claim for my own, and of whom I could talk and boast. As Blinky's stories multiplied, I felt a little bitter about it, and thought that injury and injustice had been done me,—though by whom I could not say. So it happened that in my longing for some sort of equality with my idol, I formed an attachment for one of the small graves, which lay in a pretty shaded corner, and called it mine. Slyly,—for I was unwilling

to make public confession of this odd affection,—slyly I learned that the quiet occupant of this mound was a girl of six years,—a foundling, like myself, though I did not then know what that meant. I was glad it was a girl; for upon the whole I liked girls much better than boys. So I took care to keep the headboard standing straight, and the grass and weeds pulled and trimmed away. After a time, as my sense of proprietorship grew, I transplanted some white and red clover into the earth of the grave, and watered it with great pains, when I could do it without fear of detection. Then I would sit down and plan a little romance about *my* folks who were buried there,—a romance with which I intended to surprise Blinky some day, when I had wrought it to completion. But at best my brain was clumsy in building romance, and many days passed before I dared think of letting him into my secret. I had never heard him speak of any graves which were his, and I took great pride in thinking that I had a precious possession which had been denied to him. At last one day I took him with me, and with some misgivings showed him the grave and told him a breath-

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less story;—that there were my father and mother, all my sisters and brothers, and a lot of angels who belonged to me, enough to people a small paradise,—as indeed they had done for me. “And, Blinky,” I said; “you ain’t got no graves, with people in ‘em.” But in the flash of Blinky’s eye I saw the fire which was to burn to the dull ground my first air-castle.

“ ‘Course I ain’t,” he said scornfully. “What do I want with old graves? My folks don’t get dead; it’s only common folks what dies.”

Thereafter I neglected my charge, and suffered the weeds and grass to grow as of old.

CHAPTER III

TIME PASSES

I HAVE told some inconsequential things,—things which may not all belong to the proper sequence of my story. But when an old man sets about telling of his life, or when he thinks of it, in the deep quiet of his own mind, he is very apt to dwell longest and most fondly upon some of the little things of no consequence; for they may be more a part of himself, and may have had more than the larger events to do with the making of his manhood. When the man has grown to strength, large things may not move him; but small happenings make the sum-total of childhood. Such small things as I have related formed the bulk of my life until I was about ten years old, and had begun to learn something from books, and to understand that there was a part of life before me, for which I must prepare;—which I believe to be the cruellest lesson of childhood. But

they were happy years; although that seems a strange thing to say of an asylum life.

For some reason not to be explained, unless it might be that I was a sober little fellow, serious and grave-eyed beyond my years, I was a favourite of Hale's (for that was the name of the big-bearded man). He used very often to have me by his side, when he would talk to me as to a man of his own understanding. He made me to love books; especially those that told of great events which had made and moulded men, and—still more wonderful and fascinating—those that told of men who had made and moulded events. Such books I would read, boy though I was, with heart beating fiercely, and with brain throbbing full of wild blood. He also taught me to love the gentler side of human character, and to think somewhat of what men had been, as well as of what they had done. But more than all those things, he taught me to love himself; and although we did not consciously try, that was the easiest lesson which he had to teach or I to learn. I remember him now as I thought of him then,—gentle as the lightest breath of summer air in the trees, strong as

the brown earth, and true as the blue sky.
As I loved him, so do I love his memory.

While I was growing up, Blinky Meade was also growing; but he seemed to grow in all things much faster than I. I have said of him that as a boy of six years he was a strange little fellow, and one set apart. That became more and more true of him as he added other years to those six. He was never dependent upon any one for the good he got out of life; he drew upon his own resources, and thanked no one for aid.

I do not remember when I first grew to understand that Blinky's tales of wonder were lies; perhaps that, like all others of those early lessons, was learned by slow degrees, so that the disillusioning might not be too sudden and great a shock. I know that after a time my slow wits understood that Blinky was a liar,—not a coarse and common liar; for his tales were often marvels of vivid and fervid beauty: still he was a liar, and no longer the same to me when I had found it out. I hardly know what to say of our relations after that; it would matter very little, save for what was destined to come to us when we were men. We were

still very close to each other in many ways; but it was more like men's friendship than children's, because of its element of reserve and distrust,—a sad comment upon manhood, but not to be gainsaid. It was Hale who unwittingly threw this vague shadow between us, by teaching me to love the plain pure truth and not to depart from it. I know that I reverenced Blinky less when I had so outgrown the innocent confidence of childhood that I was able to detect a lie. But we were always friends; he was the only child for whom my heart held a child's faithful adoration. I relied and rested upon him, for I felt great need of friends. He relied upon no one save himself and the creatures of his imagination. He had a sturdy independence,—a square setting of his head upon his little shoulders, and a way of flashing strange lights from his brown eyes. He did not like to obey rules; he loved to set his foot hard upon the tail of rule and propriety, for the pure love of the uproar which followed. But I should like to say once more that I loved him, and I think that he loved me as well as he could love any one save himself.

I have passed hastily over these few years.

I should like to dwell upon them, but I could not justify such lingering by any large relation which they bear to my story. During that time I learned many things, some of the lessons being easy and some being very hard. One of the hardest was that as I grew older I must leave behind me a great deal of what had been very sweet and pure and pleasant. It is a sad thing to put off oneself,—to grow away regretfully from what one has been. I did not like to realize that innocent childhood was dropping away from me,—dropping, dropping, dropping each day, while I looked more and more into the future. Our tenure of life is after all so fleeting, so momentary, so disproportioned to our easy sense of the security of living!

In this later time, Hale used often to sit with me under the trees, talking to me in his gentle way of many things,—of my studies, and of plans for the time when I should be a man. He chose that way to give me courage for hard work. But one day, when we were together, he passed little by little from words into silence, keeping his hand upon my shoulder with an affectionate pressure, then at last laying it upon my head and lifting my face

so that he might look into my eyes. In his own eyes I saw a shadow ; hovering at first, then growing persistent, as of something coming, not yet to be clearly seen, but only guessed at by the shadow. I knew that he had something more to say ; so I slipped my small hand into his great one, and waited.

“Pokey,” he said at last, quite suddenly (he always called me by the name which the boys had given me) ; “you are growing to be a big boy now. Pretty soon the time will come when you must go away.”

Had he said that the big brick house must go away ; that the rows of blue children, or the trees and sky must go away, he could not have startled me more. I could only stare at him, wondering. He held my hand, stroking it softly while he talked.

“I have meant to do my whole duty by all the children ; but somehow I have thought more of you than of the others, because I feel for you a great love, besides my regard for duty.” He paused then for a moment,—and a very painful throbbing pause it was for me, full of the feeling of having been lost somewhere and forgotten. He let his eyes wander over the pleasant yard, with its summer

lights and shadows; then up to the blue sky showing through the maples; then to my troubled face. When he saw how troubled my face was, and how full of dumb wonder, he stooped and kissed me. "A part of my duty is to find homes for my children, when they have grown to your age, and now I must find a home for you. I wish that I might keep you myself, dear; but my own children are so many, and I fear that I may not stay here very long myself. I have grown out of the place. I do not think as they would like to have me upon some great questions, and so they may give the asylum to another man. I want to find a good home for you before I go."

During all this time he had been stroking my hair from my forehead, holding me close to him, as though to reassure me, until at last I could bear no more; then I dropped my face into his lap, and began to cry heart-brokenly. He let me cry for a time, while he caressed me; then he raised my head to his shoulder and helped me to clear away the tears.

"There," he said quietly. "Now we must be men together, Pokey."

As I looked into his tender face, bending over me, there came upon me a sudden throb of doubt as to the justice of my judgment of Blinky Meade's stories about his angels. Perhaps—I could not be sure—perhaps there were angels upon earth, after all; not in shining clothes and white wings, as Blinky said, but broad-shouldered, blue-eyed and thick-bearded,—manly angels. Has any one ever painted such an angel into a picture? Why not? I should like to know.

"I want to talk to you about yourself, dear," he went on in the same quiet way. "When you are a man, I want your manhood to be strong and good. There will be mighty things for men to do in your lifetime, no doubt, and great trials to be gone through. The nation must surely see those times, before it sees peace again. It may not come while I live, but it must surely come one day. It is to be a question of men's freedom, Pokey. Do you know what that means?"

I knew only in part what he meant, and so for a long time he sat with me in that peaceful place, talking to me of the great wrong of human slavery. It was all very wonderful to my boyish mind; I could not fully under-

stand, though he did his best to have me. It is so hard for a child to understand wrong.

“So you must make yourself ready to take a part by and by,” he said at last. “Be a good boy, and then it will not be hard or strange for you to be a good man. Don’t tell a lie. I would like to have you willing, if it must be, to die or to be shamed before all the world, rather than to tell a lie, or live one.” A very curious thing to say in such a world, at such a time, to a boy of ten years! But I listened, rapt, and have carried his lesson in my inner heart, always.

CHAPTER IV

A MAN

ONE day, not very long after that talk with Hale, I crept away with my books, longing to be alone, so that I might begin practicing in secret the things that Hale had taught me,—for I had already learned how easy and pleasant it is to be good in secret. While I lay in the shadows, reading, I heard Hale's big voice calling: "Pokey! Pokey! Where's Pokey Upjack?" Then the children upon the playground took up the cry, in shrill treble chorus, until the yard was full of it, and I came from my hiding place.

Hale stood upon the wide steps leading to the front door of the asylum, and by his side was another man. I guessed what was coming; and so, while I walked slowly toward them, I looked with deep interest at the stranger.

His hair was heavy and long upon his shoulders, and snow-white; but the snow seemed to have fallen out of due season, for

his face was ruddy, like a young man's, and unwrinkled. But it was an old face, after all; for when I looked more closely I saw that all the lines upon it were softened, as though by the heat of manhood, and the gray eyes under their shaggy brows were full of that sort of kindness which belongs only to age. He stood very straight and held his shoulders well back. He was not large, but when he was younger he must have been strong; there was strength remaining in his walk as he came down the steps to meet me.

"Is this the lad?" he asked of Hale; and Hale answered, "Yes, this is the lad."

The old man laid his hand upon my head and looked into my eyes so fixedly and long that I grew a little abashed, though I tried to give him back his honest glance.

"Thee looks like a good lad," he said quietly. "What has thee in thy hands?" I told him: "Books."

"Books?" he said after me, with a sober setting of the lines about his lips. "And both arms full! There must be a weary lot of them." He turned me around, so that he might better see how many there were. "A weary lot of them," he repeated. "And thee

looks like a good lad. Has thee a Bible with the rest?" Yes, I had a Bible.

"And does thee read it?" he asked. I answered Yes to that question also.

"And does thee do what it tells thee?"

"No," I answered honestly. "I like to read it; but I do what *he* tells me," and I pointed to Hale. The old man laughed softly.

"Then thee *is* a good lad!" he cried heartily. He stood quite still for a time, looking at me intently, but appearing to be studying some times me and some times himself.

"Tell me about thyself," he said at last, abruptly; and encouraged by his gentle manner, I told him all I knew of myself, and of the simple thoughts and purposes that had grown up in me. While I talked, he helped me some times with a question, so that I kept nothing back. When I had finished, he was thoughtful, sitting down upon one of the stone steps, so that he might think quite at his leisure. He was so very deep in it, and his eyes seemed to be so far away that I almost lost hope of having him get back to me; but at last he looked at me.

"I once had a lad like thee," he said simply; "a good lad, and one who loved

books." Then he stopped again, as though his words came with an effort; and when I looked at his face I guessed why it was so; for those tell-tale lines by his mouth were wavering and uncertain. "My lad died, thirty years ago," he went on very gently; "but I have seemed to see him again to-day, in thee. Thee must come home with me and stop with us a bit, so that we may get to know thee better. Would thee like to do that?"

Before I answered, I glanced at Hale. His eyes were glistening. I loved him very much, and could not bear to think of leaving him.

"You would better go, Pokey," he said, though he, too, seemed to speak with a strong effort. I turned once more to the old man, bravely trying to hide my tears, thinking that tears might not be manly enough to please him. But he seemed glad to see me crying, for he said again and again: "Thee is a good lad—a good lad!" And so it was arranged that he should come for me the next day and take me to his home.

I do not like to think of that day, for it was one of the hardest though one of the kindest and sweetest of my life. That may be hard

to understand. I was leaving a great deal behind me, and the future was becoming very big and real and near at hand. I hoped that there might be some of the children who would be sorry because of my going away; but they did not show any sorrow; they only looked at me with round eyes, when they knew of my fortune, as though they envied me. Even Blinky Meade fell below my hopes, for he did not change from his usual manner of solemn indifference, though he spoke frankly to me.

“You’re going to lose *me*, Pokey,” he said, as though that was a summing up of all possible evil. “What’ll you do when you don’t have me?” But never a word of his own regret. I doubt if he felt regret. I remember that when I realized how disappointed I was, I prayed after a new fashion. Theretofore my prayers had been nothing more than overflowings of happiness; now, for the first time, I prayed for something I wanted,—strength. And while I prayed, God seemed to smile upon me; but it was a strange smile,—giving a half-promise of what I sought, yet full of mysterious meaning, as though He would have said to me: “All right; but

wait a while, my boy." Before that time when I wanted comfort I would go to my books; but now I did not think of them as able to help me. I must have been wiser than I knew. Books are not often very fecund with the sort of wisdom which is of use when the heart is beating out of time.

But my books were all packed up with the rest of my things, to be ready when the old man should come. He came about the middle of the day, riding in a big farm-wagon drawn by strong horses, and my few belongings were stowed away in the wagon, while the asylum children stood around, looking on. But none of them cried. When I was ready to go, I looked at Hale. I suppose I did not appear very cheerful. When he saw my plight, his eyes filled with tears and he lifted me in his strong arms.

"There, there!" he said softly. "Keep up a good heart, my dear boy. You will soon be a man, and I shall be very proud of you. Try to remember what I have told you. Be truthful and true, and everything will be right with you." He kissed me upon the lips, and his wife hugged me to her gentle breast. Then I got into my seat in the wagon and

was driven away, while over me there came a flood of visions and of recollections;—strongest of all, the memory of the day of my awakening, years before, when I sat by that roadside, watching another wagon fading out of sight, and longing to follow it.

It is good that children have large reserve powers of being happy;—that while they have neither the strength nor the wisdom to shape things for themselves, they can turn adverse circumstances to account and be happy nevertheless. That ought to be a man's power, rather than a child's, inasmuch as men are supposed to get wisdom in the course of their growth out of childhood. But children have the best of it, despite our philosophy of wisdom. Except we become as little children, we are forbidden to share in the kingdom of God,—whatever that may be or mean. Perhaps if we carried something of the quality of childhood into our years of greater wisdom, we should find the kingdom of God nearer at hand than we are used to think it, and not so very mystical and mythical after all.

As we rode along, it was not very long until I lost some of the sharp sorrow of parting,

and began to wonder what might be in store for me in my new home. I cast covert glances at the old man now and again, and at last I caught him looking sidewise slyly at me. He broke into a warm laugh, very good and pleasant,—a laugh that made me think of a broad hillside covered with waving ripe wheat lying ready in the sunshine for cutting; it was so very mellow, and so full of a sweet outdoor sound.

“Well, well!” he said gleefully; “we have run each other down. Now we must like one another. I shall not be afraid of thee any more, and thee must not fear me. Fear isn’t so nice as love; does thee think so?” And after that I did not have much trouble in loving him.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached his home; but when we drew near, the mere sight of the place was enough to take away the weariness of the long ride. It was a large farm-house, standing in a beautiful yard, with generous fields all around it. There was a wide verandah in front of the house, covered with a thick web of vines, and the dooryard was gay with flowers. It was all very quiet and peaceful, like Sunday.

The old man's wife (I knew at once that she was his wife, because she was so like himself) came out to meet us when the wagon stopped before the gate. First of all, the old man stooped and kissed her; then he led me to her, and she bent down to kiss me. She had a serene and beautiful face. Her eyes were like a June sky, blue and deep—so deep that there was no getting to the bottom of them. No mean creature ever had large, clear straightforward eyes, placid and peaceful.

They took me into their home and gave me a part of it. Those two were all that made up the home, excepting some young and strong men and women who worked upon the farm. Every one seemed happy, as though life was well worth while. It is not easy to be brief in telling of such pleasant things; but I must say at once and abruptly that those gentle Quakers loved me and were good to me, while I grew to manhood.

Does one know when he first becomes a man? I used to wonder about that, as the years passed. I grew to be very big and strong, with much breadth of shoulders; and sturdy legs under me, and I was able to do a

man's work while my understanding was still boyish. Like most men, I had a certain pride of size and of vigour of bone and muscle. When I was eighteen, there was none of the farm-hands who could put me upon my back in wrestling. But when I thought about it quietly, meaning to be honest with myself, I knew that I was not yet a man, and I longed for the time to come when I should be able to prove myself. A man's strength, whether it be of muscle or of brain, is of little value to him until it is proved. The peaceful life upon the farm, with rain and sunshine and change of seasons, seemed to be of small service to me, except as it was putting health into me against the time of need. The time had been when I regretted the fading of childhood; now I wished to take leave of it altogether.

But it was good to wait, after all; for the years of waiting were full of many things,—things not all to be told of, but all going to make up the sum of manhood. Many good influences had been slowly taken into solution in my character, and in the later time, as the volatile spirit of youth began to evaporate, those good influences crystallized into the firm resolve to honour my godly teachers by

being a good man. And then it was, no doubt, that real manhood laid hold upon me. Conscious effort toward goodness is not a thing which pertains to childhood. When such conscious effort begins to ferment in the heart, one may know that he has passed that hard-to-be-defined boundary,—that he has stepped aside from the dewy by-paths of childhood, and is out at last upon the dusty highway.

As the years ran on, peacefully, happily, as I have told, mighty things were stirring the nation's blood, making its great heart beat to a strange new measure. At last, when I was near to my majority—as nearly as I could guess my age—there was high flood of excitement in our quiet neighbourhood, and in every quiet home. The news had come—the very air was electrically charged with it—that Congress was in labour with a fateful birth. Politics had indeed made strange bedfellows. This political love-child was to be christened Squatter Sovereignty, and was to have for its playground a part of the vast prairies of the West. There could be no doubt that it would become a lusty child; certainly its care would prove troublesome.

There were those who hoped and prayed that it might die in the throes of birth; but it was hope devoid of reason, and prayer devoid of faith. The political midwives were accounted skillful; there was very little uncertainty as to the outcome. Meanwhile, those who listened for the infant's first cry of life were setting their lips grimly.

Adams, my good old Quaker, divided his speech between laments over the weakness of the nation's counsellors, and laments over his own growing weakness of eye and limb.

"What does thee think, lad?" he once asked of me, his eager old voice trembling; "are we only a race of political weaklings? Have we no more heroes?"

"Oh, yes," I told him, with the feeling strong upon me that I spoke the truth,—though prophecy is always a dangerous business. "Times of trial always make heroes. Why should this time fail?"

He bent his head upon his arm, and remained silent for a long time.

"God send it may be so!" he cried at last. "I wish it had pleased Him to let me keep a man's strength of body, while I keep a man's will and purpose!" He got upon his feet, and

every line upon his strong face was drawn tense. But in a moment he sank back into his seat, and his age seemed to rest upon him with a great weight. "I have passed the time of vigour, and shall have to sit still here at home and look on at others acting the part of men!" He was not used to talking in that way; but since I have grown old, I know what he felt, and how cruelly hard a thing it was that had fallen upon him. By and by he arose and came close to me, resting his hands upon my shoulders, while his dimmed eyes glowed and blazed as a dying fire will flame fitfully through its wreathing smoke and gathering ash.

"I am not going to be disappointed in thee, am I, Pokey?" he asked. I was glad from the depths of my heart that I could look without flinching into his earnest eyes.

"Do you mean that you want me to go to Kansas?" I asked.

"Thee must go, lad, if the territory is opened. And thee must be strong enough for two, because I am only an old man—an old man." He said it over and over again, as though he thought it a reproach rather than an honour. "Thee must go!" he repeated.

"Yes," I said; "yes, I will go. Surely, I will go." The old man, in his eager delight, kissed me upon the cheek, as he might have kissed a child that had pleased him.

"I am not so hopeless any more about heroes," he said, and his look was very sweet and pleasant. But my promise had been made willingly; yes, more than willingly, for I was full of a new-born passionate desire to have a part in manly strife. And here was to be the chance, made ready to my hand. I was longing to practice the things that had been taught me,—to practice them not in secret, but openly and in the sight of men.

"Thee does not need to be warned of what thy going may mean," Adams said after a thoughtful pause. "There will be great hardship to be borne, no doubt, as men look upon hardship. But the mark of the real hero—and I hope that time may show the mark upon thee—is that he does not think of the hardness of things when he is undergoing them, but thinks only of the glory of the outcome." He was walking back and forth as he talked; and he talked as though all his life was being summed up in what he said, though his words were so few. "It would be

a glorious thing, my dear lad, if the spread of human slavery might be cut off from new soil. And thee will find others there like thyself, to bear good company. To bear company to such a cause would be almost like bearing company to God. Oh, I wish I might go!" It was very strange to hear from his lips words which had in them anything like a flavour of discontent or rebellion. "Maybe I do wrong to get so impatient," he said, with quick return to his usual placid temper; "but a man who has been strong does not easily grow reconciled to weakness and infirmity. But there! Thee must play the man for both of us!"

With all my soul I resolved to live up to all I knew of manhood.

CHAPTER V

OFF FOR KANSAS

THE days passed swiftly, when a definite purpose had been injected into them. We waited impatiently for the news, which we knew must come, that Kansas had been thrown open for settlement,—for settlement and war. We were all full of courage, and this was not at all abated when we learned, little by little, what we might have to meet in our new home. It is but natural for a man to long to measure his integrity and fortitude not alone by wordy boasting, but by the stress of large events.

The springtime of 1854 had been full of goodly promise upon our Illinois prairies,—strong and lusty, so that every living thing seemed to be full of vigour, and trying to do its best. Life out of doors was very sweet, with muscles straining at the plow, while hearts beat time to the movement of mighty thoughts. Thus spring ripened, and the

prairies were gorgeously alight with the prophecy of summer.

Upon the first day of June, while we sat at our noon-time dinner, our hearty appetites were suddenly abated by a shout from a horseman who had drawn rein at our gate.

“Come out here!” he called and we saw that he waved a newspaper over his head. I was at the gate in a moment, so eager that I let Adams follow as best he might.

“President Pierce has signed the bill!” the rider cried. “May 30th,—yesterday. Here it is; read it!”

He thrust the paper into my hand. The words were black at the tops of the columns. The news was very simple and plain, yet throbbing-full of portentous meaning.

“So it is law,” Adams said quietly, as he came up and looked over my shoulder. His seventy-three years appeared to be not so great a weight after all, just then, and his eyes were glorious.

“There’s to be a meeting in town to-night,” the horseman said. “Come in. There’s emigration news from Boston, too—great news. They’re on fire back there. And say! A lot of fat-heads went to work and tolled

the bells on the churches in town last night; —said freedom's dead, you know! I think they're in too damned big a hurry with the funeral. We aren't a lot of boys, are we, up north here? No, sir! We'll fight, won't we? I reckon so! Just give us a chance. What! Well, I'm going on to stir up some more of you farmers. You be sure to come in, you two. We want every man about here to come in and speak his mind." He struck his horse upon the flank with a switch he carried, but before the beast could get away, the rider had drawn rein again. He was an excited man.

"Say!" he cried; "this means war, don't you know it?"

"War?" Adams repeated sadly. "War? Does thee think so, friend? Does thee really think so?"

"It certainly does," the other man answered. "Mark what I tell you; Kansas will be only the beginning. No matter who gets the worst of it out there, the other side won't quit, will it? Right or wrong—don't make any difference; Americans don't quit for one licking."

Adams was giving no heed to this noisy

speech. I could read in his eyes that his thoughts were very far away.

"And you mind this, too," our visitor said: "we're going to get the worst of it for a while, sure. The framers of the damned bill have taken care of that. Missouri's right across the river, ain't it? What'll they be doing in Missouri? What are they there for? Of course we'll get licked. But we'll stay with 'em, won't we? Sure!"

He seemed to make light of all this. He spoke as though he was relishing a good joke which carried a laugh with it. It is an American way. "Well, good-by, boys. I can't stay here always; I'm after the rest of to-night's crowd." And this time he was off, his horse striking into a quick nervous gait, as though it felt something of the man's excitement.

I would have given Adams my arm to lean upon, as had been my habit of late, since he had become so enfeebled in limb; but he did not heed the offer; he had suddenly grown very erect and firm, and he carried his cane as though it was a plaything, rather than an aid to infirm steps.

"We shan't lack excitement in Kansas; does thee think so?" he asked.

I looked at him, smiling. "We?" I suggested.

"We!" he said after me, with hearty emphasis. "Oh, I'm going, boy. Does thee think I could stay at home? Then thee doesn't know me."

But I knew him better than he thought; I knew him far too well to make remonstrance.

"There must be old heads, as well as young arms," he said. "Old heads know best how to keep peace. We do not want warfare; for wars lead nowhere save to peace at last. We would better reach peace at the beginning. God's ways are ways of peace. But young men like thee will be hard to hold in check, once their warm blood is stirred; doesn't thee think so?"

I laughed a little shamefacedly, knowing that he spoke the truth. "I should like to make all men keep peace, even if it is necessary to resort to war as a means of doing it."

The meeting in the town was like all American public meetings. I have never seen one which differed greatly from all the others. It was very noisy, very strong-scented,

and very little devoted to any definite purpose, so far as surface indications showed, unless that purpose might be to work itself into a frothy frenzy. Parts of the newspapers were read aloud. They were full of sad news from the nation's capital,—sad because heavy with the unspoken threat that freedom was now a vagabond in the land, and must take care of itself. But there was other and more hopeful news from far New England, whence, when all is said, the nation has drawn most of its strength, and most of the things worth loving and fighting for. New England was not talking alone of moral support. Moral support was cheap and plentiful. We should need men, money and means for holding our own upon the prairies; and those things the news from Boston promised.

But in our meeting there was a deep undercurrent, beneath the breath-blown surface; there is always an undercurrent in the hearts of our people, though it is often hard to be seen through the foam of light levity or lighter boasting. It is always present, setting onward surely, strongly, and any cause large enough to reach down to it is floated in safety. Therein lies our salvation.

While the meeting-place was tumultuous with the general clamour, little groups of men separated themselves from the rest and stood in corners or in hallways, talking in sober undertones. Among them were to be found those who were going to Kansas. They were not noisy, nor wordy, nor vain-glorious; they had passed far beyond that point.

Patience! What a word that is! This nation has few interpreters of its grim meaning, as others read it. We are not long suffering in idleness, when there is work to be done, once we have made up our minds that we are the chosen workers. We can endure, but we cannot patiently wait. When we have made choice of our paths, we are eager to tread them; even though they lead to death, we are impatient to die. So it was with those of our neighbourhood whose thoughts had been turned westward. For the most part we were poor men, and we wished to leave our loved ones in comfort. There was no means for doing that, save by attending to our fields; so our fields claimed us far into the summer, until we knew that we should not be among the first of those to reach the new ter-

ritory; but we hoped that there might not be need of us in the meantime. That hope was our largest comfort, as our constant toil was our greatest relief from the sharp discomfort of seeing others soon passing westward on their way to Kansas.

Through the years that had passed since I left the asylum, I had heard from Hale very often. Politics, the cradle of so much wrong, had forced him to leave his charge, to whose care he had given the best of his life; but he wrote to me, and I to him. He was always hopeful; such men never lose hopefulness. He had made a quiet home for himself in Iowa, where he might grow old in peace and independence. Those times were full of forebodings for those who loved uprightness. I knew that Hale had suffered keenly.

Of Blinky Meade I knew nothing in those later years. He had left the asylum soon after my own departure. He sent me one or two strange letters,—letters altogether like himself, full of unsubstantial visions, and full of the calm assurance of selfishness. That was long ago, however; I had not heard of him for many years. But my thoughts

would turn to him very often, when they had time to stray from daily duty. I wondered what had become of him,—wondered whether he was alive, and what part he would take in this new world's drama.

I wished Hale to know of my purpose, when once it was formed, and I set about writing to him. I could think of no better way of spending the heavy night hours. It was to be a long letter, and the leisure of several nights had been spent upon it, when one day a letter came to me:

“MY DEAR BOY:

“This is written to send you a brief good-bye. We start for Kansas to-morrow. I fear that there may be little time for writing from the new home, but our hearts are with you always. We hope that you may do your part. Has not the time come? JOHN HALE.”

That was all. But it was quite enough. When I had read the letter, my daily round of prosaic life became very unreal and dreamlike, as life will appear to a man when his thoughts are elsewhere. But I read duty in each day's labour;—duty to those who loved me nobly, who had made me what I was, and whom I loved with an immeasura-

ble devotion. No one can understand the stress of such thoughts until he has himself felt them swelling in his soul.

I am not equal to the telling of what came next; but it must be told in some fashion. The fervour of excitement had aroused Adams from his placid unruffled age, until his soul was ablaze. There is no eagerness so pathetic as that of an old man when he longs to do the things of youth and strength, and knows all too clearly that he cannot. The fire which kindled in Adams was but the afterglow of his manhood, and he understood that perfectly.

“Pokey, Pokey!” he would cry to me. “Thee must indeed be strong for two. I am going away, but not to Kansas. Perhaps it is best, for I doubt that I am fit to be the Lord’s servant in this work. God grant I may be willing to abide by what He sends, though it is hard upon me.” But his thoughts were not all of himself. Though his time for thought was now much foreshortened, he thought of us all. “Thee has been like a son to me, lad, and now thee is a man. I wish I might live to see thee begin thy man’s work. God’s will, God’s will!”

And so from day to day we saw him growing weaker and weaker, until at last he died, while his aged wife sat by his side, and his head lay upon my shoulder. It was a quiet death, and beautiful to see. If hopeful life be one of God's blessings, what shall we say of such a death?

When we had buried him upon one of the fair hillsides there at home, and there was but one left for me to love, the detaining strength of that love was multiplied many times. I could not go away, though the passing months brought urgent calls. Ill-omened things were happening in Kansas. Early prophecies of those who doubted our national integrity were seeming to find large fulfillment. The pioneers were beset by stronger evils than their fears had created; for they had feared unorganized lawlessness and violence, while their enemies were in fact controlled and organized by able leaders, whose every thought and act was embittered with hatred. They asked no questions of the proprieties. They had resorted to any means which promised effectiveness in dealing with the matters in hand. Popular elections in Kansas had been turned into

grim burlesques by invading hordes of armed men; the government of the territory was in the hands of those who had effected its opening for settlement,—just as had been intended from the beginning. Theirs was not a pacific policy, but one of terrorizing,—always a favorite policy of the short-sighted. Force of numbers had given the invaders a semblance of success for the time being; but the future was something over which the thoughtful were puckering their brows, doubtful whether its problems were to be solved save by opposing force. The crime of murder had reddened the black page. Peaceful settlers who had resisted usurped authority had suffered death; settlers not so mild-hearted had themselves resorted to killing. No one could see the end; all awaited the inevitable crash of final conflict.

In the spring of the new year, Adams' old wife went to seek him in that far country, where she too might be made acquainted with God's ways, which are indeed ways of peace. Who can doubt that a life of godliness is well worth while, if its end comes at last with such ineffable sweetness and serenity? I had few tears for the departure of

my well-beloved friend, for whom death was the crowning glory of life.

I remained at home for only the little time that was needed to straighten the simple worldly affairs of those good souls; then I was ready to face destiny, hopeful that it might be measured to my impetuous desires for vigorous action. I joined the first party which went westward through our neighbourhood.

There were three wagons and six men in our party, the men all young and strong, and all rich in that delicious inexperience which makes youth so sweet. We gave sufferance to no thought save that things must turn out well by and by. We could only guess what would come in the meantime, and foreboding of ill is not a trick in which young men are skillful. Perhaps we were a little dismayed and afraid some times; but the fear came only in brief flashes, like those from a hovering storm-cloud, while our courage was like sunshine. Our wagons were loaded with the tools of peaceful pioneering, and with some other tools which did not go so well with the thought of peace. We were well provided

with all things that we were likely to need in making our way in a new country.

The journey was all too slow, for we were heavily laden. Through the long August days we plodded onward upon the summer-clad roads, and at night we slept upon the ground, beneath the broad summer sky. Onward, onward; each day onward, while we gathered health and strength, will and fortitude, knowing that we were likely to need all, and longing for the time to come when we might begin using them.

CHAPTER VI

ELIZABETH

AFTER a few days we were joined by two other wagons which came into our road from the north, and we all went on together. The strangers were from Ohio, where some good men have been born. The days passed more quickly when they were with us; and I found them passing pleasantly, too. I do not quite know how to tell about it, except in a very plain way.

There were four of the newcomers, two men and two women. Of the women, one had settled into the rigid composure of middle age, taking things as they came, without either enthusiasm or complaining. She was the wife of one of the men, and a good wife, no doubt. If she was a little too stolid for my liking, she was also solid and substantial,—one of those strong creatures upon whom the heaviest burdens rest lightly. But my thoughts were not very much concerned about her; they were busy with dwelling

upon the other woman, who was of about my own age. I am quite hopeless of being able to write what I saw in her and thought about her.

She was light and slender of body, but so lithe that no one would have thought her wanting in agile strength, save that she lacked the ruddy hue which marks the more robust. Her hair was glorious,—massive, and full of bright living lights; and, though it was worn in a demure fashion, it seemed rebellious of confinement, and to be struggling for a freedom of its own in the pure summer air; so that there were always light strands of it flying about her ears, or blown across her cheeks. She had a good clear face, which was moulded into strong lines, each full of virile character, and there seemed to be no room for those lighter and more fleeting dimples and shadows without which few women's faces are beautiful. But as I looked at her furtively now and again, and as I dwelt upon those glimpses in the intervals, I became satisfied that she was very beautiful, though it was not easy to say wherein her beauty lay.

Sometimes she would leave her seat in the

wagon and walk by the roadside, as though she enjoyed it, and found such activity a greater luxury than sitting still. At such times I found myself growing restive, too; and on the second day I left my wagon and walked by her side. There was such community of interest in our party that my meeting with her was free from any constraint. When I drew near to her, she looked at me with perfect frankness, and then I knew at once why I thought her beautiful; it was because of her eyes. They were large clear eyes, blue and pure, and deep enough to hold every human passion,—gentle sympathy and kindness and love,—yes, and just hatred, too, no doubt, if the turn of events might arouse it.

“We shall be many days together,” I said for introduction. “We ought to know each other’s name, even if we know no more. My name is Pokey Upjack.”

By the mention of my name to a stranger, I was always able to conjure a smile. Though the girl’s lips were controlled, I saw the smile dancing in her eyes.

“My name is Elizabeth Archibald,” she told me simply, and the music of the soft syllables and of her calm voice gave me one of

those indefinable thrills of pleasure and satisfaction. I thought of my own name as being very rude and coarsely made.

“I have been wondering to see women undertaking such a journey,” I said. “I am afraid that Kansas will not be a place for women just yet.”

It was not what I should have said, as I saw at once; for the smile sank back into the depths of her eyes, and they showed instead a discomforting glow of defiant light.

“Why not?” she asked.

“It will be a hard life, with very little comfort in it. It is to be a life of endurance, not one of enjoyment.”

“Comforts!” she repeated; and the tone of her voice was changed, too, while the glow of defiance was kindling into a flame. “Are you one of those who think of a woman as at her best when she is nurtured upon comforts?”

“Well, yes,” I answered honestly enough; for that was really all I then knew of women. “I mean I don’t like to think of a woman’s being subjected to hardship.”

“Why are you going to Kansas?” she

asked. "Is it for the purely selfish enjoyment of a little hardship?"

"Selfish enjoyment?" I had to ask in my turn. "No, of course not. It will be a hard part we shall have to act in Kansas; but that is a man's duty, and a man's right."

"And a man's pleasure, too," she said; "isn't that so?"

"Yes, and pleasure, too," I confessed. "But it is a pleasure above the deeds themselves. It is not the brute joy of fighting, but the joy of fighting for a just end."

"Ah!" she breathed softly. "Then the joy of doing justice, and the joys of heroism are to be denied to women?"

With the girls back at home I had been used to talk, when the chance offered, of the beauties of light and shadow upon the rolling hills, or of the softness of the starlight. Dimly I wished that I had spoken of those things to this girl.

"No," I said; "I would deny to a woman nothing that she is able to do or to enjoy. I doubt that a woman's strength will be equal to what is before us. It is not alone a question of impulse or conviction. By and by the intoxication of fervid impulse will be gone,

and then it will all come down to dull fortitude, enough to tax the strength of the strongest."

She bit her lip, so that the marks of her teeth were left upon it. She was not pleased with me.

"She who has the fortitude to endure the trials of such place as you would assign to women, must find relief in any other trial. Do you think nothing better of us than you have said? Are we to be only lookers-on at the serious work of life?"

My wits had but little room for turning; but they were conceiving a mighty admiration for this girl.

"What will you do?" I persisted. "It is a practical problem, to be solved by muscle, as well as by strength of will. There will be plowing in tough prairie sod, and house-building, to say nothing of what may have to be done with rifles."

"I shall go with these people and shall do my part. Haven't women always done their part in new countries? Have they ever been found wanting? I have taught school in Ohio. There may be schools to be taught in Kansas by and by."

Our speech had been free of any adornments of courtesy; for we were speaking honestly, and courtesy is not often absolutely honest. As I turned and looked into her intent face, it was honesty which flashed out again:

"If there be schools to be taught in Kansas, God grant they may be taught by such as you!" I held out my hand, and when she had looked at me for a moment, she laid her own hand in mine. "Forgive me, won't you?" I asked. "I fear I am not very wise concerning women."

"No," she frankly agreed; "you are not beginning right. There are some human qualities that are not limited by sex."

Thereafter we talked for a little time of other and lighter things. And by and by, when I returned to my wagon, I had a new thing to think of, for whiling away the slow hours. I thought a great deal about her. And at night, when I had rolled myself in my blanket and lain down upon the ground, it was a long time before I slept. It was a beautiful night; heavy with sweet summer scents, softly pulsing with a blur of summer sounds, a light south wind keeping all gently astir;—

one of those nights which make a man think that until the present moment he has not tasted of the full richness of life;—one of those nights when eyes and ears are of no distinct use, save as aids to an eerie imagination. I think I felt something of this, as I lay staring upward, and trying to form the old stars into the lines of a new constellation,—two of the brightest for eyes, others for lips and chin, and the soft mist of the milky way for a mass of fair hair. It was a very beautiful night.



CHAPTER VII

SHADOWS CAST BEFORE

THE next day we crossed the river into Missouri, where we had to expect hostile opposition to our progress, when it should become known what our purpose was. We had heard many ominous tales of other emigrants' journeyings across the state; those tales might not be all true, but we knew very well that we should have no cordial welcome. But that was the shortest way into Kansas, and our impatience was far greater than our caution. We had resolved to be prudent, keeping our wits about us and our mouths shut, so far as might be. We could do no more than that, for we were but eight men, all told. Our firearms were hidden from sight, though they were not beyond reach in case of need. It was impossible to foretell events, and that was not at all welcome; for a man may relish a known danger, while dreading one that is altogether imaginary.

But the days passed in outward quiet, after all. Forbidding looks and undertones of threatening import were lavished plentifully upon us, but we met with no direct molestation, and that was all we had hoped for. Fortunately we were all endowed with a large genius for silence, which has served many a man in a tight place.

A part of my daily life was to walk for a little while by the side of Elizabeth Archibald,—and a very pleasant part of life it was, full of many things of which I had not even dreamed before. After that first day, we had got on very well together, talking freely of our new life. And by and by we began to talk of other things than politics and freedom. It is hard for youth to be altogether abstract and impersonal. Abstractions are pale and cool; the blood of youth is red and warm. She told me many things of herself, and of the life that she had left behind her; nor was it long until she knew my own simple story. We were the best of friends.

And thus, with one golden summer day upon another, all filled with the winey spirit of free life and hope, with the blessedness of unbounded health, and with anticipation of

the early fruitage of our plans, we drew near to Kansas soil. In another day or two we should take our places among the makers and moulders of a free state. But our journey was not to be wholly uneventful; for that happened which changed the course of our lives.

We were plodding slowly forward through the sultry day. The road did not lead straight away, but twisted and turned along the course of a wooded stream. The shadows were very grateful, and the air was of a balmy fragrance which acted upon our hitherto alert senses like a strong sedative. We were intent upon nothing save the drowsy pleasure of the moment. My wagon was in the lead of the train, and as I turned a sharp bend in the winding trail, I came upon a sight which caused me to stir myself, as though to shake off sleep; for the change was swift as the transformation of a dream.

There was a cleared place in the midst of the deep woodland ahead, and in the middle of the clearing there stood a rude log house, large, rough-hewn and mud-thatched. A dull cheerlessness overhung the place, as though the life of the people who lived there

was a constant hard struggle to subdue the persistent imps of the wilderness. The door-yard held a rank growth of wild plants which had arisen since the timber was cleared away, making the yard to look ragged and frowzy, as though the genius of pioneering had found this task too great and had sat itself down in deep dejection of spirit, to brood upon the futility of further effort. It was not such a home as I had left behind me, nor such as I hoped to make for myself beyond the river. But it was not the unpleasant picture of wilderness that startled me.

In the midst of the tangled yard two men stood near together, facing one another. Both were tall, well-made and strong, and clad in the loose free style of the border, with shirts of flannel open at the throat, and coarse trousers tucked into the tops of cowhide boots. One was a man past middle life, as might be seen by his face alone; for the lift of his shoulders showed all the tense vigour of the prime of physical manhood. In his powerful right hand he held an uplifted short whip of rawhide, ready for instant use, and with it he made strong threatening gestures as he talked. The other man was

much younger, though he had the best of it in robust stature and breadth of shoulders. His head and neck were full of that massiveness of muscle and sinew which is to be seen in a young bull; his face was large, heavy with turgid muscles, and clean shaven,—or perhaps it had not yet come to the time of beard. He wore no hat, but his head was covered with a close-tangled thicket of tawny hair. In his arms, locked tight against his breast, he held a half-naked negro child which cowered close to him, its face hidden upon his neck. Across the child's bare back, from shoulder to waist, was the livid mark of a whip-stroke, with some red drops of blood trickling out, dyeing the gray flannel of the young man's shirt.

The old man's face was contorted in a spasm of passion; his voice was a high-pitched impotent shriek: "Put that nigger down!"

The lad's voice came like the masked roll of distant thunder, swelling mightily in his throat, as though it was hard to be held back: "I will not put her down!"

The uplifted whip danced wildly for a moment, and the shriek was repeated with a

fierce oath: "Damn you! Put that nigger down!" But the lad stood finely erect, making no answer, moving no muscle. With a sharp cruel sound the lash descended upon him, and then it was his own blood that stained the shoulder of his shirt. I stood up in my place in the wagon, bringing my horses to a stop. I did not wish to see murder done. The young man was much more than a match for the old one; he could have killed his assailant with a blow of his great fist. But he did not move, save to raise his hand for warding the blow from the child. When the lash had fallen, he stood like a statue. I did not know what to make of it, and I sprang to the ground and began to push my way toward them through the matted weeds. The old man saw me, and he burst forth furiously: "Stand where you are! What do you want here?"

I continued forward slowly, while the young man also turned and looked at me. His was such a face as cannot be forgotten; it was the face of one whose manhood was at its strongest and best. He was flashing red and white by turns with righteous anger, yet the strong firm jaw showed perfect mastery

of self. As he glanced at me he spoke quietly, as though he read my intention: "Stand where you are, please. It's all over now; he won't strike again."

"Won't I?" the old man screamed. "You put that nigger down, or I'll strike as long as I can lift my hand." He brandished the whip, as though to make good his word; but I sprang forward and caught his uplifted wrist firmly. With a harsh snarl he turned upon me, struggling to wrest himself from my grasp. He threw his left hand behind him, striving to reach the pocket over his right hip; but the lad had set the child upon the ground and come to my aid, so that we each held one of the old man's arms.

"Don't let go," the young fellow said with the same quiet manner and tone; "he'll shoot, sure. Wait till I take his pistol away." That he did easily, slipping the weapon into his own pocket, while our prisoner struggled and ground his teeth in silent fury, his cheeks and lips purple, his eyes frenzied.

Never in all of my life have I seen another human face so devoid of humanity. As I now remember it, it gave me the impression of having been cheaply furnished with a lot

of second-hand features,—ill-matched brutal eyes, a frayed fringe of dry beard about the throat and chin, ill-formed lips, which could not hide the irregular array of broken-down yellow teeth that were straggling, toppling and neglected as the stones in a forgotten graveyard. It was not a face upon which kindness could lie without much discomfort to itself; it seemed wholly surrendered to the foul tokens of baseness and meanness, and with its momentary fierce fury fresh upon it, it made a most ungodly sight.

“I wish you hadn’t come in,” the young man said to me. “I could have quieted him, if I’d been alone; I’ve done it lots of times before. There’s no use tryin’ to quiet him now, though. I reckon we’re in for it. We may have to stand here and hold him for a week.” He broke into a broad smile, as though he found some humour in the position. But there was no reflection of the smile upon the sullen old face.

“You’re a strange fellow,” I said, speaking my thoughts plainly, and as though we were out of hearing of our captive. “Why are you afraid of him? You could lift him over your head, big as he is.”

"What good'd that do?" he answered. "I'd have pitched him over the roof, long ago, if I'd had my way. But he's my dad, you see. I hain't got no particular regard for him on that score: but I have for myself. It'd kind of go against me to lift my hand to him."

"Well! But look at the blood on your shirt," I suggested. He appeared to have forgotten his hurt. He set his teeth grimly as he turned his head and looked at the dark stain upon his sleeve, and his voice was passionate when he spoke again.

"Oh, I've taken lots off of him; no two ways about that. I wouldn't have took it if it hadn't been for Her."

Who might Her be, I wondered; and the boy answered the question in my eyes: "Mam, you know. Dad's good to her. Funny, ain't it? She's the only livin' soul he cares a straw for. He's never touched her. I've pretty near wished he would lift his hand to her, sometimes,—just easy, like, so I could feel right about givin' him one lick with my fist. But I can't do it so long as he treats her right."

The old man's struggles had grown less

furious, as he gradually realized the futility of contending against us. He stood with his chin sunk doggedly upon his breast, his breath coming and going in ragged gasps through his widely parted lips. Since we had laid hands upon him, he had not spoken an articulate word, though his throat was choking with brutish sounds. He had contented himself with casting evil menacing looks from one of us to the other. By this time two or three of the other wagons of our train had reached the clearing, and at sight of the struggle some of the men left their seats and hurried toward us.

“Tell them to keep away,” the young man said. “We can take care of him.” The men returned to their places, though they waited, to be ready in the event of need.

“Where are you going?” the young fellow asked. “Is it a Kansas outfit?”

“Yes,” I answered.

“What are ye? Free Soilers?”

“We are all Free Soilers,” I told him.

“Abolitionists?” he persisted.

“I’m an Abolitionist,” I answered; “and so are some of the rest of the party.”

The old man renewed his struggles with

greater vigour than before, while white flecks of foam lay upon his livid lips.

“Let me go!” he bellowed. “There’s no damned Abolitionist on top of earth shall hold me!” He struck out viciously with his heavily shod feet, and gave us greater trouble than was welcome in the sultry air.

“I reckon two of ‘em can do it, though,” the son said, when this spasm of energy had spent itself. The old man turned his blazing eyes upon the young face, and his muscles suddenly relaxed.

“You!” he gasped through drawn lips.

“Yes, me!” the young man flared in answer. “Me! An Abolitionist! Understand? Might as well come out now, Dad. The same township can’t hold you and me no more after this, not while we’re both alive.”

“Then Lord strike you dead!” the father cried harshly; and again his chin sank upon his breast.

There was a silence of doubt upon us for a few minutes, none of us moving. The old man was lost in his own gloomy thoughts.

“Say,” the young giant said presently; “I’ve got to get out of this. I can’t stay here no more, not after what’s happened

now. Ain't there some way I could fix it to go over into Kansas with you folks? I take up a good sight of room myself, but I ain't got much to tote with me. If you'll let me, I'd like to go on with you right now. I wouldn't expect to stay with you, understand; all I want's passage. I've been to Kansas. I know all the settlements from here to Lawrence, where most of the Free Soilers goes. I know the trails to take to keep away from the Pro-Slaves. You ain't huntin' trouble, are you?"

I liked his manliness; his fearless sturdy way appealed to me strongly. I told him that he could have a seat in my wagon if he wished it.

"I'm much obliged," he said simply. "I ain't goin' to forget it, neither." He looked at his father and then at me, with a whimsical, half-foolish smile. "What am I goin' to do with him? If we let him go, he'll stir up the whole county, before we can make the twelve miles between here and the river. How many men have you got with your outfit?"

"Eight," I answered.

"Tain't enough," he said decisively. "If

we let him go, he'll have thirty or forty on our trail inside an hour; an' they'll expect to do some shootin', too. Thirty men can mostly out-shoot eight or nine. We've got to fix some way besides lettin' him loose. I reckon there ain't no way but to tie him up. Rosy—look at that little nigger, squattin' where I put her, scared to budge!—Rosy, run around to the cow-yard and fetch me that bunch of rope hangin' on the fence. Run along, that's a good child." The pitiful little figure crept painfully around the corner of the house, returning presently with a coil of stout half-inch rope. With this, despite the old man's powerful struggles, we bound him hand and foot, wrapping him about with the rope-ends until he was wholly helpless.

"I better tote him in the house," the son said; and he lifted the dead-weight to his shoulder and bore it into the cabin, I following as he beckoned me. "It's a good thing Mam ain't to home," he said as he laid his burden down upon the floor of an inner room. "It'd go ag'in her to see Dad mistreated this way." He stood for a few moments, bending over his father, looking into

the hate-distorted face. Through all this later time the old man had not spoken.

“Dad,” the son said; “there hain’t never been no love between you an’ me; but I hate to be too hard on you. Will you promise not to holler, if I leave your mouth loose?” The only answer was a sullen stare, malevolent, and full of hard unforgiveness. I turned away, for I did not like to see it; but the boy was not much disturbed. “All right, Dad,” he said coolly; “I reckon I’ll have to tie your jaw up, too.” He found a coarse towel and began folding it into a strong bandage, the old man watching with kindling eyes.

“You imp of hell!” he cried in his helpless madness. “Lord hear me! Kansas won’t hide you from me! I’ll trail you to the end of the earth—I will! I will!” But ere the fiery threat was done, the towel was drawn beneath the wagging jaw, and tied firmly, so that no sound could issue from the ugly lips save the sound of wild passion simmering in the hairy throat.

“It’s a hot day,” the son grinned. “He ain’t goin’ to feel very good, all tied up like that, an’ with the doors shut. Whose fault is it but his’n? Mam won’t be home till sun-

down. Unless some of the niggers find him, he'll stay here four or five good hours yet. We'll be mighty close to Kansas by that time." When he had reached this conclusion he seemed well pleased. He delayed for a little while to gather together a small bundle of clothing and some odds and ends of his possessions. Then we went out, closing and locking the doors, leaving the old man stretched upon the floor. I noticed that the owl-eyed little darkey had disappeared. I feared that she might spread an alarm, and I said so.

"Who; Rosy?" the young man laughed. "You don't need to worry about Rosy; she ain't goin' to say nothin'; she can't. She hain't ever talked none since she was born. She's kind of foolish in her head. That's what makes Dad get so mad at her,—because she don't seem to have no sense."

He took his place beside me upon my wagon-seat, and our train got under way once more. He was full of boyish glee, which wrought his face into an expression of great good humour, very different from its stern square-jawed aspect when I had first seen it. Despite his great size and strength, he was not now much like a man.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE NEW SOIL

“SAY, what’s your name?” my companion asked after a few moments; and I told him my name.

“Pokey—Upjack!” he repeated slowly, with an amused chuckle. “Pokey Upjack! What is it? Nigger or Injun?” I told him as well as I could where and how the name was made. He listened with serious attention, but without comment.

“My name’s Arch McCulloch,” he said when I had done. “Arch is just the short of it; if you want to say it all, it’s Archibald.” Archibald! The name, spoken so unexpectedly, conjured the warm blood to my cheeks.

“What’s the matter?” he asked, looking at me curiously. “You act like you’d heard the name before.”

“There’s a lady in the train whose name is Archibald,” I answered; “so I have heard it before.”

"That so?" he asked, with a light show of interest. "Where's she from?"

"Ohio," I answered.

"Why, Mam was an Archibald, back in Ohio. That's where I got my name,—for her folks. Mebbe she's some of my kin. Whereabouts is she?"

She was in the wagon that followed mine, not so far in the rear but that McCulloch could see her face clearly. "I reckon mebbe she's one," he said briefly. "There ain't none of 'em right down handsome, that ever I've seen,—chin'stoosquare an' big, an' looks too sassy. She looks like she might belong to the tribe. I'll find out, when I get a clean shirt on. Say, he must have hit me a right smart clip; my shoulder don't feel a bit good." He lapsed into silence for a while, nursing his injured arm; then he burst out:

"Dad, he's a weak one! That's why I don't like him, I reckon. I don't like weak ones. Mam, she's different. It's the strong ones I'm sorry for, because they need it. A weak one never tries to tote nothin'; but the strong ones is always tryin' to tote more'n they can lift. That's Mam, all over. It don't look right!" By a swift transition he

seemed once more a man, thoughtful and stern-lipped. His face was subject to those quick changes; it responded at once to his moods. "That's why I'm sorry for Him," he said.

"Him?" I repeated in question.

"Yes;—Christ, you know. Don't you think he pretty near needed it? He must have got awful tired an' lonesome. Ever been lonesome, Upjack?—Say, is Upjack all of your last name? Or is it all one?"

When I had answered his last question, he seemed to have quite forgotten the one which went before it; he did not recur to it again, but talked in that inconsequential manner of many things. He was a strange fellow. Not once did he speak of the circumstance of his having said good-by to home, nor did he seem at all saddened by it. While he talked so lightly, he made no demand upon me, save for a brief word once in a while, to show that attention was awake. I was studying not his speech, but himself,—looking at him in the light of his name, and wondering what might come of this strange meeting. He was perfectly self-centered; nothing seemed to disturb him, or to throw

him from his balance of calm assurance. Despite his knowledge of all that had occurred within the space of a short hour,—despite his ignorance of what might come within another hour, he was not at all dismayed. He made foolish jokes; he told quaint stories of the life of the border; he bared his head to the woodland air, and seemed quite content.

But suddenly, while he was in the midst of a laugh over one of his whimsical tales, and while I had my eyes fixed upon him, trying to make up my mind about him, the dancing lights went out of his eyes, and they were overcast, while the heavy muscles in his face were fixed.

“There’s Mam comin’,” he whispered, laying his hand upon my arm. “Oh, Lord! I ‘most wish I hadn’t seen her.” For the first time since our meeting, he was agitated.

I looked ahead, in the direction of his dismayed glance, and though it was a heartless thing to do, I laughed, for the picture there was quite grotesque. Along the shaded roadway a slow-paced, harness-worn old mule was coming toward us, its head drooping to its knees, its eyes half-closed. Upon its back there was perched a diminutive wo-

man's figure, clad in a limp and dejected garb of rusty black, worn shiny and bare in places, like the coat of the mule; and she wore a much-creased and stringy mourning-veil draped from a fashionless straw bonnet. Her whole costume,—if it might be called by so high a name,—gave pathetic assurance of having been home-made out of something left over; the wearer herself bore the dispirited air of being a badly-worn left-over. Her black bonnet made a shelter for her face, so that I could not see what she was like until she drew near to us and levelled the barrel of her bonnet upon us; then I felt sharp sorrow for having laughed. Her face was thin, pale and haggard, as the faces of so many middle-aged women are, bearing that dumb but never despairing endurance which does not fall to the lot of many men. It was a very sad face, with faded lips held in calm restraint, and worn eyes full of patience.

McCulloch leaped to the ground and ran toward his mother, throwing his great arms around her, lifting her from her saddle and pressing her close against his breast, as he might have held a child, protecting her with his strength. He pushed her bonnet back,

and kissed her again and again upon the faded cheeks, upon the lips and upon the thin gray hair. When I saw that, I began to love the boy.

“Mammy!” he cried with wonderful deep feeling. “Dear old Mammy! I’m goin’!”

She lay quiet in his arms, looking up into his face. Her own face did not change its expression, save that the lines upon it grew a little deeper.

“Archy!” she said in a moment: “I knew it must come, some time. I ain’t sorry, because I reckon it’s best.” She laid her head down upon him, and he put his cheek against her hair. “Mammy’s baby must be a good boy,” she said. “There’ll be a-many things to go wrong with him; but he mustn’t forget what Mammy’s told him.” The great fellow seemed very plastic under her words; the muscles of his massive chin were trembling, and tears were running down his broad cheeks.

“Does Dad know?” she asked, and the boy’s tears vanished before a light laugh.

“He knows, all right,” he grinned. “He took it pretty quiet, too.” He gave himself up for a moment to frank enjoyment of his

joke; then, by another of those mysterious changes he was a man again. He placed her upon her saddle, and kissed her cheek with all of a man's serious way. "Good-by, Mammy. I ain't ever goin' to forget you. You'll have a better time now, too; Dad 'll be peacefuller when I ain't there to keep him r'iled up." And then again he kissed her upon the lips, very fondly. "Now," he said, "make that mule lope as hard as she can, so you'll get out of sight before I weaken."

There were no more words passed between them. Her thoughts were so full of him that she paid no attention to the rest of us. She urged the ancient mule into a heavy lumbering trot, stirring up a cloud of road-dust through which beast and rider showed spectrally. McCulloch stood quite still until they had gone from sight down the winding road; then he laughed irresponsibly.

"A woman certainly looks comical on a mule, don't she?" he said, as he climbed to his place at my side; "especially if you get a hind-sight of 'em. I'm glad I got to see her, though; and I'm glad my last sight was a hind-sight;—it looks so funny it don't make me feel so bad." With no more of effort, he

became as gay-hearted as he had been before their meeting. But sometimes, as we rode along, his manner would show quick flashes of thoughtfulness.

"There's just one thing on earth I don't know," he said at one of those times. "What makes Dad and Mam stick to each other the way they do? It beats me. Every way else, he's a brute; there ain't nothin' too low-down for him. But he sure does act right with Mam. And say! why Mam sticks to him like he was worth it. There ain't nothin' could make her go back on him. I think that's the funniest thing in Missouri."

Soon the outlines of things in the woodland grew shadowy and uncertain, and the shadows seemed to encroach more and more upon the roadway, while the tiny patches of sky showing through the trees were deepening from blue to purple. We urged our horses forward. Urgent travel was most unwelcome on a day of such sultriness; but should we fail to cross the river ere night-fall, we should most likely be sorry for it. McCulloch was more eager than any of our own party to reach Kansas at once, and he made no effort to hide his anxiety.

"I ain't scared for myself," he said. "I've got you fellows to think about now, after you've done so much for me. I reckon I had no business to come with you; I never took trouble to think what it might get you into. If the Blue Lodge scoundrels get after you, they won't stop at anything."

"Blue Lodge?" I asked.

"Blue Lodge; yes,—Social Band,—Sons of the South;—Lord! don't you know about them? They're societies, an' they say they're goin' to run Kansas. They've come pretty near doin' it, too, seems to me. They've stood pretty close together, election times, an' such; they're oath-bound, you know. Everybody, pretty near, except me, belongs to 'em; but I wouldn't, an' that's why I've had such a warm time over home. I've kept my mouth shut mostly, except to Mam; but they suspicion that I'm a little contrary on this nigger business. If we don't get over the ferry to-night, they'll be after us, sure, hot-foot."

But I was not very well pleased with myself, when I thought about it; for here was I running away from the first shadow of danger,—it was not even a shadow of real danger; it was nothing but a fear. I turned my

horses out to the side of the road and let the rest of the wagons pass on, so that McCulloch and I might have the hindmost place in the train; then we let our horses take their own time, and we felt better about it. When McCulloch saw what I meant to do, he laughed delightedly and laid his arm across my shoulders.

“Say, me an’ you ought to be pardners. I like the way you do. I ain’t never had a fight yet; but that ain’t sayin’ I don’t want one. I’ve been pretty close up to the edge of one sometimes, but I don’t seem to be able to get in the middle.” He held his hands together upon his knees, cracking his huge knuckles with great relish. “Trouble is, I ain’t got no judgment. If I had my way, I’d never stop to think about odds or outcome; I’d just *fight*. Mam, she’s watched out for me, lots of times, or I wouldn’t be here now. She says it ain’t right to fight! Ain’t that a crazy notion? I don’t see the sense of it, except because Mam says it. Understand, I don’t want to make a fuss about nothin’; but sometimes things do get so mixed up an’ all wrong, it looks as if a good hard lick with a big fist like mine maybe might straighten ‘em out.

Then's when I want to fight. An' look here, I'll tell you what: If them Blue Lodge cowards ever cross my trail over in Kansas, you know what I'm goin' to do? I'm just goin' to go to work an' forget everything Mam's ever told me, until I lay a few of 'em out."

As I looked into his flushed face, I found my heart acknowledging kinship to his, and sending the warm blood in a red flood to my cheeks. I thought of dear old Adams, and of his gentle caution and counsel of peace; and I was startled to find how soon those mild influences had begun to seem very faint, unreal and far away, now that I had stepped into my new life and the time was drawing near when I should have to make up my mind for myself about the business of fighting. Though I thought of Adams' warning of patience, the echo of his words in my memory did not deaden my quickening heart-beats. Who, after all, will deny to a man the wild joy and the glory of conflict for righteousness' sake? Is he true to himself who only strives to subdue and to conquer the pulses of passionate fire that beat and leap in his soul when he looks upon wrong and injustice;— who lets the wrong go unrighted, and quiets

his coward heart by prating of peace? It does a man good to surrender himself for once in a while to his longing to see justice done,—not counting the cost; letting heart, head and hand work together, giving all that he has and is to do good to his kind when they need him. The purest joys of my life have not come to me over the byways of caution and prudence, but over the great broad highway of manhood's God-given passions. The men who have led and ruled the world in its serious work have been those who have placed full trust in their manhood; for caution makes man but a pigmy, but passion makes him a giant. I thought of these things as we two sat together on that summer evening, wondering what was before us, and hoping we might have the spirit to make the most of ourselves.

But we were not yet to be suffered to make trial and proof of ourselves. McCulloch's knots must have been well tied, for as night fell we reached the shores of the river without adventure, and ere the darkness had quite enclosed us we were upon the soil of the great new territory, which rolled away and away, a vast and beautiful land of promise.

CHAPTER IX

ALL ON A SUMMER NIGHT

IT WAS a solemn hour for us all. We were not mere adventurers in search of material rewards for effort. We had hoped to work out for ourselves the chance for walking upright under a free sky, as men and women surely have the right to do, and we wished to open the way for other like-minded ones to come after us. I do not think we were selfish; had we been so, we must have kept out of Kansas. We had a purpose before which the consideration of self faded away, like night-fogs before sunlight. I do not say this for boastfulness' sake, but because of the wish that the hardy spirit of my companions may be understood. We were not vain of our achievement in reaching the new soil, but we were pleased and glad;—serious, too, and inclined to speak few words; for there was among us an understanding far stronger than any which might have been built upon words.

When we had gone a little way back from the river-landing, by a quiet trail which McCulloch showed us, we made our camp for the night, and after we had eaten a little, and had cared for our horses and picketed them near the wagons to graze, we lay down to sleep. To sleep! Once I was stretched at my length upon the ground, sleep seemed a foolish thing to be thought of. The flames of the sinking camp-fire threw fitful lights and shadows upon the white wagon-covers,—strange handwriting upon new walls, full of portentous prophecy, if only it might be interpreted;—lights prophetic of well-being; shadows pregnant with threat of things not all easy, though no doubt to make for our good at last. And the night wind, stirring in the prairie grasses, seemed to be doing its best to whisper an interpretation to my listening ears, and its voice was sweet and low and soothing. I could not sleep; I could not even think. The soul sometimes reaches those exalted estates where it finds the process of thought impossible and unnecessary;—where all it needs do is to lay itself bare and take its blessing without effort, fresh from the hand of God. And while I lay

there, it was with soul bared. Manhood stretched away before me like the wide prairie, sun-kissed, wind-caressed, but wild and unsubdued. Prairie and soul together were to be wrought into order, and to render of their fruits according to their richness.

By and by I saw that some one was moving in one of the wagons. It was near to midnight, and the drive of the day had been long and exhausting; I had thought that my companions must all be sleeping soundly. The women alone kept to the wagons in the night-time; so I knew that it was one of them who had found herself stirred beyond power of sleep. Why I hoped so it might have been hard to say; but I did hope that it was Elizabeth Archibald. In a moment I saw that it was she, for she drew apart the rear curtains of the wagon-cover and stepped quietly down to the ground. She had thrown some light drapery over her head, and she began to pace softly back and forth just beyond reach of the dying fire-light, but where I could see her form outlined against the starlit sky. As I watched her, my wandering thoughts came to a focus upon her. Day by day, as I had looked at her,

talked to her and listened to what she had to say out of a pure heart and a resolute mind, I had found myself looking not alone forward, but upward as well. I had not thought of love,—I mean I had not thought of loving her, but had given myself up to those influences which womanly goodness and purity exert upon a man. Theretofore I had been quite content to see her sometimes, without growing impatient over delay; but now I longed for the sound of her voice. I followed her with my eyes for a few moments more; then I arose, drew on my coat which had served for my pillow, and went out to meet her.

She paused in her walk when she heard my step in the long grass, and I said quietly, for reassurance sake: "It is only I—Upjack. Have you too been restless?"

"No," she answered me; "not restless at all, but calmer than I have been since we started from home,—so calm that there's no need for sleep. The wagon was so narrow and cramped. I wanted to get away from it, and from everything there,—from wheels, and implements, and bed-clothes, and every-

thing so pitifully human. Do you understand? This immense night suits me better."

"Did you want to be alone?" I asked. "Maybe I would better go back to my blanket."

"No; stay," she said simply. She laid her hand in the cradle of my arm, and we walked slowly onward side by side, away from the camp. She did not speak again for some time, nor did I; she appeared to be wholly occupied with her enjoyment of the wide peaceful night, so restful and beneficent. And I found myself strangely at peace, too, —a new-born peace, though whether it came of the gentle influences of the night, or grew up wholly within my heart, I could not have said surely. I was glad to be there, and glad to have the light warm hand upon my arm. The girl's face was indistinct in the starlight, but I could see that its expression was wondrously softened, by so much as the starlight was softer than light of day. And while I timed my steps to hers, I looked sometimes at her, and sometimes far away toward the vague line of the horizon.

"What a strange thing happened to-day," she said by and by, speaking as though her

thoughts had been dwelling upon the matter. "Were they father and son?"

"Father and son," I answered. "It does seem strange. It's like finding a lion sired by a jackal. There was never greater contrast between men. The boy has untamed courage; I'm glad he's to be with us."

"I like such bravery," she said quietly, "because it's a natural part of the man. True bravery isn't at all artificial, is it?"

I had to think for a moment before I knew that I agreed with her. "No," I said; "if you mean the fighting instinct, it's certainly born in the animal, with the rest of his heritage of brutality." I was not speaking quite as I had that day learned to think, but I wished to hear what she would say.

"Of course," she said, "the mere unreasoning instinct is valueless. Its fineness lies in keeping a clear eye on the object."

"But the mere physical courage of the fighting man isn't rational," I said perversely. "The fighter does his thinking afterwards."

She turned her face toward me, and her fingers tightened somewhat upon my arm. "That isn't true, is it?" she asked quietly.

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I laughed a little shamefacedly; and I was glad, too, that I had been found out. "No," I owned; "it isn't altogether true. But this is: Women always overvalue physical courage in a man. They do it as naturally as men fight. Both together are relics of the old days. The lioness stands by while the lions tear each other, and then she mates with the victor."

There was a little silence after that, while once again I felt that I had failed to please her with my speech. I was finding out that I always failed to please her by just so much as my speaking wandered from the candid truth. She had a strange divination of the truth, even as it lay in another's heart.

"Forgive me, girl," I said presently. "I shall never speak so to you again. Now let me be honest, just for my own credit. The real bravery of the man lies in his keeping to his manliness, no matter what the hazard. He must make no concessions and no compromises. He must go willingly where that course leads him, whether it be through the frost of disapproval, or through the fire of battle. He must take what comes of such

course, and look upon what comes as a blessing; for it will be a blessing. Now!"

And right glad I was to have done so well. She drew nearer to my side, with her head bent down, and both of her hands were laid upon my arm, with a swift pressure; then she laughed softly, and her laugh carried a note that thrilled me. I thought that her hand, as I pressed it to my side, must feel my heart's quicker beating.

"Now we understand one another," she said.

"Upon that matter, at least," I answered.

"Nothing else signifies," she returned.

"We have said nothing of women," I urged.

"Why need we? Do you set a different standard for the woman?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry to hear you say so," she breathed. "It must be a lower one; there is no higher."

"No," I said strongly. "But it is very different,—as different as peace is from strife. For strong strife and watchful care are the price a man pays for his goodness, if he gets it at all. He has to achieve it by

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effort. But goodness is the woman's lawful heritage. Why, girl! it's surely plain enough! Look at the face of a good man; it bears the hard marks of the terrible struggle of restraint. But the face of a good woman is placid and serene."

We walked on, silent, thoughtful. I burned to say more, but I dared not. It was a trying thing to have come to an understanding with this girl; it tried me in more ways than one, though I rejoiced in the trial. For I have ever been one of those whose thoughts are slow to waken, and slow to move,—lying still and sleeping under the fret of light circumstances, but moving at last with a firmness, right or wrong, that is hard to be subdued. And all at once I found them awakened and aroused to such pitch of vigour that I must keep firm hold upon them. I feared to say all that I thought, though I thought nothing unworthy. No man will understand this, unless his mind be of the slow and ponderous type, like my own.

After a while Elizabeth paused and turned back toward the camp. "We forget to-morrow," she said. "We shall have to be careful

of our strength, until we have come to the end of our journey. We must go back now and sleep; we must at least rest."

We said nothing as we walked toward the glowing speck of the campfire. When we were within the circle of the firelight, she gave me her hand. "Good night," she said, and her beautiful eyes were lifted to mine. I held her hand for only an instant, while I looked at her,—for only an instant, yet in that brief time I saw how generous and sweet a gift life might be, if its ways were lit by eyes like those, so true and pure. Yes, more than that; I saw that I was suddenly uplifted by a passionate desire to have the ways of my own life so illumined. I knew surely, surely, that my heart was no longer but a still pool, unstirred from within; it was a living fountain, with love welling in its depths. And as I knew that, I bent my head and touched the girl's hand with my lips, and then I closed my own hand upon it, so that she had to let me keep it for a moment longer, though she tried to take it from me, her cheeks glowing rosy-red in the dull light.

"Girl, girl!" I said, struggling to possess myself; "we understand one another some-

what, but not perfectly. Sometime—" But I saw then that I gave her distress; and so, though I could not hold my tongue in check, now that it was set a-going. I did the only other thing I could,—I loosed her hand from mine, and turned away to my bed upon the ground beyond the fire.

McCulloch's place was beside mine, and as I made ready to lie down, I saw that he was awake and looking at me, his broad face smiling. "You're a sly pair!" he said. "Midnight, and starlight, and all that sort of thing! Oh, you'll do! You can go up head of the class!" But I put out my hand and laid it upon his lips. I was not in the mood for his light raillery. He seemed to understand, for he grasped my hand quickly with his strong fingers and gave it a sympathetic pressure.

"I didn't mean nothin'," he said seriously. "I'm glad;—sure I am. A man like you always treats a woman right." He turned away, drawing his blanket over him, and I soon thought him asleep; but he was not.

"I'd like to love a nice girl," he said in that frank direct manner of his. "It must do a man good, don't it?"

I laughed a little foolishly; but his boyish innocence inspired confidence, and I answered without embarrassment: "I think so, surely. I'm a better man than I was an hour ago."

"An hour ago!" he repeated. "You don't mean it's only an hour?"

"Yes; less than that," I said. "You saw more than there was to see McCulloch. There's nothing between us as yet; but I hope—sometime—" And there again I had to stop. He sat erect, resting his elbows upon his knees, his chin upon his hands, while his unclouded eyes studied the fire and the dim landscape that lay beyond.

"I hope so," he said soberly. "Anyway, you'll be likely to remember your first night in Kansas, won't you? I'd be glad now to find that she's some of my kin. Maybe I'll be callin' you Cousin Pokey one of these days; how'd you like that?" But like most of his questions, that did not require any answer; at least he did not seem to expect one, for he made himself comfortable upon his rude couch and was soon breathing deeply, as became a tired man.

He slept soundly enough for two; which

was well, for I could not sleep at all, but had to lie with wide eyes staring up at the night sky, taking no account of the passing of the hours until the stars began to sink far into a vast ocean of pearl-gray; and this was turned to azure, and then to rose-pink. Here and there, away out upon the prairie, there sounded a sleepy bird-note, faint and weak at first, then swelling sweet and clear, and multiplied by many, until the wide stretch of hill and vale was alive, echoing and resounding with the riotous symphonic overture to day. It was a beautiful day-dawn; the most beautiful I have ever seen, and the sweetest and the fullest of all goodness; for so do things appear to a man when love has touched his eyes with its soft finger-tips. I was a happy man, though my happiness had no surer foundation than doubt and uncertainty of the outcome. But though I had not yet much clear hope, I hoped sometime to have it; and in the meantime doubt was very sweet and worthy of being cherished.

CHAPTER X

THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK

WHEN the glory of the morning had taken full possession of earth and sky, I arose and busied myself with the camp-fire, and with the beginnings of breakfast. McCulloch soon followed me. When he stood before me, he laid his great hands upon my shoulders, looking at me as though I was a child who had done something worthy, for which he wished to praise me.

“It’s all right, Pokey,” he said. “I like you first rate. You an’ me’ll have to be pardners, I reckon, if we can make a deal. I’d kind o’ like to keep my eye on you, an’ see how things go. I ain’t no slouch to work. You just keep thinkin’ about it a little.” He did not wait for an answer then, but set about doing his share of the work, bringing in wood, carrying water from the near-by creek, and caring for the horses. But although I made a good beginning at thinking of his plan, I made no end of it;

for thought of him soon faded away, and thought of my love took its place. Nor do I blame myself now, when thinking back upon that time; for it seems to be a part of God's plan for us that we shall set greater store by love than by any other of life's necessities. Surely I was not very practical-minded upon that morning, for I suffered the fire to sink low, and made poor headway with cooking the breakfast, until the women came from their wagon to help.

But by and by we ate our simple meal, doing it hurriedly; for we were now come to the time when we must forego too close friendship with the past and ally ourselves with the future. Kansas was at hand; we must make up our minds what we were to do. And in that matter, we were very willing to listen to McCulloch's ingenuous counsel.

"I don't like to load advice on to you," he said in a modest deprecation of our trust; "but mebbe I can tell you a few things you don't know about the territory an' the folks that's in it. It's mostly along the river that the Pro Slaves has made the most trouble for the Free State men,—of course so, with Mis-

souri just across the river. If you folks want fightin' an' excitement, you better stay right around here. If you want to settle down and be quiet, this ain't no place for you. This is the way the Blue Lodge fellows have fixed it: There ain't a great sight of 'em livin' in Kansas, but they're right handy, don't you see? so they can come across when there's anything to be looked after. Everytown an' every county along the river is Pro Slave, whenever the Blue Lodge chaps take a notion to come over an' run things. Now that's the truth." He was speaking with much earnestness, and so simply that we could not doubt his good intention. To me at least as he proceeded, his speech was like a blazing torch, given us to light our uncertain way. "I'll tell you what I've been thinkin' over night. I think you better go down on the Wakarusa: know where that is? It's a good country, an' there's where most of the Free State folks from the east have gone,—the first Boston colony, an' a lot more. There's good company out there, an' good land, too. I've been down there and looked it over. There's where I'd go, if it was me doin' it. There's

a first-rate good town been laid out down on the Wakarusa river,—the first town in the territory. I reckon you've heard about Lawrence, haven't you?—named after some Boston chap that helped it along. The folks down there know what they've come for, an' that's a good beginning, ain't it? The man that knows what he wants is more apt to get it than him that ain't made up his mind yet. That's the way I figure it out."

There was so much of homely common sense in what he said that we were not long in deciding to trust to his judgment wholly; for, although he was so plainly unschooled and untrained save in those elemental instincts which are the rightful possession of Nature's out-door sons, we felt safer in confiding ourselves to the guidance of such instincts than in relying upon our own ability to reason the matter out logically. One of the chiefest blessings of pioneering lies in the fact that it brings men into first relations with nature, and teaches them to trust to their instincts. As a rule, we are too skeptical of our instincts, when we have gotten a little of what we call wisdom.

"We'd better keep off the main trails," McCulloch said when we were getting ready to move. "We ain't out of reach of Dad's company yet, an' we don't want them to clean us up the first day, do we? You take my way an' if they don't catch up with us to-day, we'll be safe enough after that." He seemed a little ill at ease while he gave this advice, as though he did not quite relish its flavour in his mouth. While he and I were putting our horses into harness, he spoke apologetically:

"You don't think I'm a coward, do you, Pokey,—runnin' away from Dad? I'll tell you the truth: I don't want to meet him over here in Kansas. Sure as we get together, something's bound to happen that'll make Mam feel bad; that's all I'm thinkin' about. It's bound to come some time, sure, unless one of us drops off beforehand. I know Dad. He won't be able to sleep good until he's wiped out yesterday's score. On Mam's account, I'd like to put off the reckoning as long as I can, so's to give somebody else a chance to get him before I do. Because, Pokey—" He paused in his work of buckling the harness and stood confronting

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me, his clenched hands uplifted, his boyish face putting on the guise of hard inevitable vengeance, blazing with passion. "Listen here! Just so sure as me an' him runs across each other, there ain't goin' to be room enough for both of us. I hate him!—Lord God, how I hate him!" Then in another moment his face was ashy-gray when the fire of passion had died out. "But it'll be hard on Mam, won't it? Dear little old Mammy! Just for her sake, I wish I could help myself. But I can't. So I'm going to do the next best thing, an' shoot quick."

I had never known a man like him. While he voiced his brutal threat with so much of uncontrolled and uncontrollable fierce anger, I own that I was afraid of him and of what might come of his being with us; but it was a fear which did not outlive the next swift change in his mood,—a return to his usual broad-smiling good nature.

"Which would look best in wings, Pokey,—me or Dad? It would take a big pair to hold me up, wouldn't it? I know I'll be scared to try my first flop, unless I get a chance to go off somewhere an' take a few

lessons from some old angel that knows how."

In our little company, all our rules of action were impromptu,—more impulses than rules. We had full confidence in one another, and mutual confidence is always better than rule of law. It is when the members of a society lose trust in one another that they begin to make hard and fast codes of law to take the place of trustfulness,—a poor exchange. We had no formal ways. I had neglected even the primary matter of making McCulloch acquainted with Elizabeth Archibald; but it was an omission which did not impede acquaintance, after all. When everything was in readiness for beginning the day's journey, and we were mounting to our places in the wagons, McCulloch went to the girl's side.

"I've been looking at you," I heard him say with his honest impetuosity. "I want to find out something. Pokey, over there, says you're an Ohio Archibald. So's my Mammy. Can I walk with you a little ways?"

She gave ready assent. It was not easy

to offer resistance to his simplicity. In the fresh clear morning, walking was a luxury and not a labour. They were both in the humour for making the most of it, and soon left our slow-moving wagons behind. As usual, my wagon was in the lead of the train, and as I drove onward I found a dear delight in following them with my eyes while they walked,—McCulloch moving, despite his size and heaviness, with the step of some wild animal, free of the weight of self consciousness; Elizabeth, with her lithe grace, keeping well at his side. I did not hear what they said; but I knew that the girl was well pleased, for I heard her gentle laugh welling up freely more than once, as though there was nothing to hold it back. I knew from my own experience that she did not laugh in that manner for one who had displeased her. McCulloch was very gallant;—but perhaps I wrong him in saying so, for his manner was nothing more than the unstudied bearing of a natural gentleman. Now and again he left the beaten trail to gather a bunch of brilliant prairie blossoms, until each carried an armload of the wild colours. But by degrees he grew less active, and contented

himself with marching slowly along by the girl's side. Their walk grew so slow that the wagons overtook them; then McCulloch helped his companion to mount to her place, and when that was done he climbed to his own seat at my side. He was not talkative, nor did his face show its accustomed lively aspect. He lounged forward, his arms crossed upon his knees, paying no heed to me until I thought it well to ask what he had discovered. He aroused himself with an effort, as though his thoughts had to travel far in coming back to me.

"Eh?" he asked. "Oh! The relationship, you mean? Dogged if I know rightly. I ain't figured it out yet. Niece of somebody's second wife's sister's aunt;—can you sense those durned things? She's kin, all right, but I don't know just exactly how it is. You see, I reckon I forgot what we were talkin' about, before we got it straightened out. I'm always a good deal apt to do that. All I know is, she's some kind of kin to me." Then came silence again, overcast with that same far-off thoughtfulness. Atlast he sat erect, stretch-

ing his arms aloft and shaking his head as though to cast off a spell of drowsiness.

“Say, young fellow,” he said with a broad candour; “I’m glad you got to know her before I did. That’s honest true. It’s saved me a heap of trouble, an’ I know it.” He threw his big arm around me and made me sit a little nearer to him. “There’s no use fightin’ against it, Mr. Pokey; you an’ me’ll have to stand by each other. I’m lots fonder of you than I was before I’d talked with your sweetheart, and found out what she’s like. I’d like to be pardners with a man that’s got sense enough to pick out that kind of a woman.” He thrust his hand into the breast of his shirt and drew forth a small packet, wrapped in brown paper and tied securely with a bit of string. “That’s money,” he said. “It belongs to me, too. I ain’t goin’ to be a beggar: I can pay half, if you’re willin’ to take me.” But there was no need for him to show his money; he had a better capital than that, and one more to my liking, though to be sure we were likely to need money in our new home. We were put to no trouble in settling the terms of our alliance, for we were both honest, and we

liked one another. When our understanding had been made perfect, McCulloch breathed a deep sigh of relief and satisfaction.

"I hope you ain't goin' to be sorry, Pokey," he said. "You won't be, neither, if muscle counts for anything;—an' I reckon it will, when it comes to breakin' prairie. I'm an old hand at the business." He passed his hands caressingly over the muscles of his great limbs and swelled out his chest as though to show me what I could rely upon in him. "I ain't able to do much with my head, pardner, when it comes to thinkin'; but I know a few things about Kansas, an' about Missouri, too. Unless I'm fooled, Missouri's goin' to make us more trouble than Kansas is. But say!" he burst out after a moment; "I ain't sure that I'm doin' just right by you, either. There's Dad. I've got no business makin' you run that risk with me. I guess I better keep off to myself until after that business is settled; don't you?"

"No," I answered very willingly. "If we're partners at all, we're partners in every-

thing that befalls us. We'll stand by each other, McCulloch."

He laughed delightedly, and hugged me again in that giant's embrace. "Good!" he cried. "I hoped you'd say that! Now I feel all right."

After two days' travel, as rapid as we could make it, considering our horses' good, we came to that brave-hearted little town that was for so many as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Lawrence! No Kansas pioneer is disturbed by any doubt as to what's in a name. Truly that was a name to conjure with, a name to be loved, a name worthy of a man's best thought and warmest heart's blood.

When we first came within sight of the place, on a morning in late September, our hearts were stirred to their depths; for there the love of liberty had made for itself an abiding place in a new wilderness. It was a beautiful spot, sheltered by low hills, with its two rivers near at hand. But little more than a year before our coming, the first hardy immigrants had pitched their tents there,—very few, but growing in numbers with the passing of the weeks, until there was a

goodly number of them showing fair and white in the clear sunlight. When we arrived, the tents were in a minority among the places of abode; there were other dwellings, to give promise of permanence,—rude structures of poles, thatched with wild grass, and some buildings of logs; not very beautiful, save as the mind might draw thoughts of beauty from the spirit which hovered over. Already the makers of this little city had learned that they would not be suffered to dwell there in peace, and here and there about the borders of the town there were primitive earth-works for defense,—grim assurance that those intrepid souls meant to fight their way to peace at last. When we knew that we were at last entering upon the stage where we were to play our part with kindred souls, all our past weary doubt and suspense faded away before the dawn of live resolution, and we drove forward eagerly.

CHAPTER XI

AN OLD FRIEND

We were received in the town without idle enthusiasm; there was no time nor inclination for any sentimental waste of energy; but we were made to feel at home, and were given a place where we might pitch our temporary camp. We had talked of our plans quite freely. Some of our party had determined that they would remain in Lawrence; but the Ohio folks, and McCulloch and I were going beyond, into the rich farming lands that lay a little to the westward.

We were all worn and weary after our long journey. The day of our arrival in Lawrence was Saturday, and those of us who were not yet at our road's-end decided that we should rest ourselves in the town over the Sabbath and take up our way again on Monday. Since leaving Illinois we had been altogether deprived of any regular rest days, by whatever name they might be

called; it was good to find ourselves in a friendly settlement, ruled by the New England conscience, where we were likely to be justified by our surroundings in spending one day in release from labour and weariness. And it was to be a notable Sabbath for me, though I did not suspect it beforehand. I know not how it may be with others; but all of the most notable things of my life have come to me without power of forecast or forethought. It is only the trivial matters of no consequence that have fallen out according to my own prearrangement.

I had begged of Elizabeth on Saturday evening that she would go with me to church on the Sabbath. I did not know what there might be in a sermon of prairie growth, but I wanted to be privileged to sit by her side through a quiet hour, when I should have nothing to do save to turn my eyes to her face once in a while, and think of her. I knew that I should profit by that. And so I was well pleased when I found that there was to be an out-door service in the morning; and when the time came, and we walked together toward the place ap-

pointed for the preaching, I was a happy man.

I do not remember whether there were any churches built at that time among the substantial structures of logs. I had found something better than a roofed church building, however pretentious it might be. Within the past week there had come to Lawrence a missionary from the east,—an advance agent of some denominationalism, who had made his home in a tent until he could find a fitter abiding place. His tent was in the midst of a group of trees, and he had promised that he would preach to those who cared to come and sit upon the grass before his tent door. The thought of such a thing was very grateful to me, for my religion has always been of the sort that seems to thrive best out of doors. I was not sure but that this might prove to be like that old sermon preached to the multitude upon the hillside.

Never was there a more beautiful sanctuary than that, with its vaulted sky-roof, frescoed by the graceful branches of the elms whose stately trunks were the pillars of the long wide aisles. Only to sit upon the

grass, with that wild free beauty all around us, and listen to the mighty anthem of summer sounds, was enough to put us in worshipful mood. I thought that he must be a poor preacher who failed to preach well there.

Elizabeth and I seated ourselves with our backs resting against the column of a tree-trunk near the little tent. The tent-curtains were folded back, so that we could see all that was within;—a few homely utensils of housekeeping, a trunk and a low cot covered with gray blankets. By the side of the cot, his back turned toward us, the missionary knelt praying. He made much show of being in earnest about it, for he held his clasped hands before him, raising them sometimes above his head and moving his body back and forth, as though he wrestled with an angel unseen by our eyes. I did not like that very well. I even felt a little ashamed for him, and wished that he had kept the curtains closed while he prayed; though there was no great harm in his way, if it pleased him.

He remained kneeling for quite a long time; but at last he appeared to have found

what he sought, for his movements grew quieter by degrees, and his praying came to an end. He got up then, dusting the knees of his black trousers;—which made me smile, in spite of myself; it was so sharp and sudden a descent, from the sublime heights of prayer to the low level of care for a matter of his toilet. He picked up his Bible, and walked to the door of his tent, where he stood facing us, letting his eyes glance over us as though trying to make up his mind as to what we were and how he should match himself to us. And while I looked at him a little curiously, trying to find in him some appearances which would justify me in liking him, I felt a strange tremor of weakness come over me, though I sat erect, with every muscle and nerve drawn straight and hard. Surely I knew that man! Where had I seen him, and who might he be? He was tall and well made, though he had none of the appearance of strength that follows upon hard work; his was more the likeness of one whose habit it was to take care of himself, avoiding wear and tear. His hands were like his body, supple and well-modeled, but not toil-marked. His head was well formed

and confidently poised, his forehead broad and unwrinkled. His face was clear and of good features, but it bore no marks of hard thought; there was even a little dimple showing upon either smooth cheek. His whole bearing gave assurance that he got along very well in the encounter with life. But all that did not aid me much in resolving my doubt about him, though it all seemed strangely familiar. To look at him was like trying to remember a familiar but forgotten word,—a tantalizing trial. But in a moment he gave me help; for as his eyes glanced from one face to another in the assemblage, at last they rested upon mine. They were large brown eyes, solemnly wide open. I knew him then; he was Blinky Meade!

When I knew that to be true beyond a doubt, I could hardly contain myself; I wanted to call out to him, or shout aloud in my joy. I thought myself blessed in seeing his face in that place, and all of my old-time doubt about him seemed ridiculous and wrong. I know that I must have shown my strong feeling of pleasure, for as he looked down into my face a frown gathered upon his own as though in reproof of my apparent

levity. I could see that he did not know me; but I knew him! and I was rejoiced to find him there. I could hardly compel myself to be quiet and to wait until by and by, when I could go to him. I was so full of this thought that I gave no heed to the beginning of the simple service; not until he began his sermon did I get back to a realization of the present surroundings.

When he began to speak, it seemed to me that I had gone back through the long lapse of years and was sitting with him once more under the maples in the asylum yard, while he entranced me as of old with his magic tongue. He had still the old manner; no doubt it had become a hard and fast habit after so long a time for practice;—perhaps his visions were real to him; even as a child he had seemed to think them real. Some men are so, and perhaps I wrong him in speaking slightly of his wonder-tales, after all. As he stood there before us and talked to us, it was not with sober counsel to give us strength for the trials near at hand; he spoke of unsubstantial things, as though he had his family of angels standing around him, telling him dream-stories which might

not be heard by our grosser ears, but which he was interpreting for us. Nor was that all: I found by and by that his family had grown somewhat larger, and that there were a few evil imps added to it, hiding in the dark places of his sermon, waiting to pop out their heads and frighten us. I do not believe that they were there by his own choice; he did not seem to love them as he loved the fairer creatures of his fancy; he treated them as though they were unwelcome, but must be given a courteous consideration notwithstanding, having been begotten by his theological training, and being a part of his professional armament. It was a strange sermon,—as strange as his old self, and as full of impracticable unwisdom, but clothed in such splendour that one was apt to forget all else while looking on at the brilliant spectacle. But I could not avoid measuring what he said by the standard of our trying time and surroundings; and when I did that, he seemed to be still a child in thought, amusing himself with a childish game of “make-believe.” I feared that if I looked too closely at his beautiful imagery, I should see that it was but a phantasm; and

so I settled back upon my own thoughts, while I waited for him to finish, when I could grasp his hand and find that he at least was not an illusion, but of warm flesh and blood.

At last he had finished, and the people loitered around beneath the trees, talking together,—many crowding about the young orator, praising him after a fashion that brought a flush of pleasure to his cheeks. I could not wait for them to leave him; I, too pushed forward and held out my hand to him

“Blinky!” I cried; “Blinky! don’t you know me?”

I had hoped to see him pleased by being remembered, and by hearing once again the syllables of his boyish name; but he was not. The flush that praise had kindled upon his face died away suddenly, leaving him very pale, and his brown eyes shone with quick resentment, while his hand grew limp in mine.

“I do not know you, sir,” he said coldly. I was too eager to reflect that he might not wish to know me, or that he might want to leave the old times behind him; I was anxious only to make him remember me.

“Why, Blinky!” I said warmly; “don’t you remember Pokey Upjack? Surely you havn’t forgotten the days—” But he put a stop to my impetuous speech by linking his arm firmly in mine and dragging me forcibly with him into his tent. He pushed me into a seat; then drew the tent-curtains close, so that no curious eyes might spy upon us. He did not sit down, but stood before me, his lips set; then he paced back and forth for a few moments, seeming nervous. Soon he paused and stood close to me, looking down into my face.

“That was a long time ago,” he said, speaking in such low tone as to make it impossible for those outside to hear. “Since that time there have been great changes. I am the Reverend Arthur Brooks.” He dropped his eyes as he said this, becoming intent upon crushing a small pebble into the earth with the toe of his polished shoe.

“Brooks!” I echoed, wondering. “Why Brooks, Blinky?”

“Brooks, by adoption,” he answered; “and by choice also. I did not wish the old name to cling to me, or to rise against me in my new life.”

“Had you dishonoured it then?” I could not avoid asking; nor could I avoid having a little of scorn in my question. He glanced quickly at me before he answered.

“No,” he said.

“You are only Blinky Meade to me,” I said, “and I am still Pokey Upjack. I hope we shall never be anything else to one another than we were in those old days, boy.” But he lifted his white hand with a gesture of impatient remonstrance.

“Hush!” he commanded harshly. “Do you want them to hear you?”

I felt the grateful warmth of enthusiasm dying down within me. I had to struggle with myself to speak calmly.

“Do you mean that you have grown ashamed of that time?”

He did not answer at once, but resumed his nervous walk, while he formed his next speech. “See here!” he said at last; “can you understand this? I have made a place for myself in the world. I am at the beginning of an honourable career. It hasn’t been easy; I have had to fight against my past, as well as against the difficulties of the undertaking itself. But I have won, and I have

no one to thank for it but myself. People are beginning to recognize my gifts, as I have meant that they should. And now—”

“Well?” I asked as he hesitated.

“Well!” he flashed in return. “I have struggled to forget that I was ever a despised asylum brat and outcast. I had almost succeeded. My present honours are independent of the past. I don’t wish to be reminded of the past. I hate it. If you persist in recognizing me, I hope you will respect my wish and call me by the new name, and not the old. Do you understand now?”

I hope that there may be few who can appreciate the bitterness of that moment. It is a sad thing for a man to find the spirit of manhood so dishonoured and the truth disowned by one whom he has trusted to uphold both. I hardly dared trust myself to speak after that; but speech was forced out of me at last.

“If I recognize you at all, it will be as Blinky Meade. You must understand that.” He knotted his slender fingers together, and I saw that he was trembling with anger as he glared down upon me.

“Listen!” he said by and by. “What are

you going to gain by that? You can gain nothing,—nothing from me. I have won position, but nothing else as yet. I am still a poor man—”

I sprang to my feet thrusting my hands into my pockets and clenching them there, so that I might not raise them against him. I did not speak to him again, but pushed by him and passed out of his tent and into the free air.

I had not spoken to Elizabeth of Blinky. She had no doubt seen what had passed outside the tent, and when I rejoined her and walked with her from the grounds, her clear eyes asked questions of me; but they were questions which I could not answer. But as I looked into her sweet true face, I found that my wound was not mortal, after all, though it was grievously painful. I took her hand and drew it through my arm. When I felt its gentle pressure, I was even able to laugh a little, though it was a laugh which might better have been left out.

“Elizabeth!” I said, calling her by her name for the first time. “Dear girl! Nothing must ever come between us. We must

wear no masks for one another. Masks have no place in such friendship as ours."

Again she turned her eyes to mine; and in a moment, so potent was their spell, all bitterness faded out of my heart, and it was possessed by a strong deep peace.

CHAPTER XII

HOME MAKING

WE WERE not disposed to dally upon our way. I wished with all my heart that we had not stopped in the town; but that was beyond remedy now, and I tried to forget what had happened, forcing myself to work with vigour in getting ready for our home-building upon the prairies.

Of those who were going onward, all had been used to farming, save Elizabeth. She chose to go with us, however, until she had learned more about Kansas, and about what she had to expect. We were all able to adapt ourselves to whatever might seem to be for the best, caring but little what it was, if it gave promise of good.

When we were out of the town, I was glad to have McCulloch talk to me, in that honestly irresponsible fashion of his. His counsels were divided between vagary and common sense, so that in listening I had to

keep my wits awake, not to miss the good of what he said.

“We’ll stay by the river,” was a part of his argument. “We mustn’t get far from water; nor we don’t want to get too far away from this town, neither. It’s a good thing to be near your friends when you need ‘em, or when they need you? Unless I’m mistaken, there’s goin’ to be a heap of fightin’ around here. It’s a good scheme to keep pretty close together. The folks over in Missouri don’t like this town. They’ve said they’re goin’ to wipe it out. I don’t believe they will, but they’ll worry us a good bit, before we’re done with ‘em. They’re born cowards, like my Dad. You could tell he was a coward, couldn’t you? Nobody but a coward would hit a little nigger idiot with a rawhide. The rest of ‘em are pretty much like him. They have to do their fightin’ in bunches, like wolves. Get one of ‘em by himself, an’ he’s meek as a lamb. If this town puts on a good front, and won’t take no back-talk, it’ll come out all right. It don’t do to let a coward see you’re afraid of him; that’s liable to make him act mean.”

Despite his lapses into childishness, I felt

quite safe in relying upon him in selecting a site for our home. This he picked upon when we were but little more than a day's journey from the town; and it was a selection which had the approval of all of us. The place where he had advised the erection of our buildings was a wooded knoll close to the river, where all the materials for building were at hand, and where in an emergency we should have protection against being surprised by enemies; while the lands that we were to cultivate were of the best,—free of timber, and lying smooth and open to the sun, so that we should be put to no needless labour of clearing.

The season was still warm, but we knew that we should have no time to spare in preparing for winter. We went to work with willing hands. Here again McCulloch's counsels prevailed.

"We've got to build right. There's only one right way. We have to build as if we expected to stay. The best way to keep from being drove off is to fix so you can defend yourself. Poles and grass are all right for weather, but they won't keep off a

Missouri Blue Lodge. Logs is the thing;
—I'll show you."

We were very busy and very happy for many days thereafter, McCulloch the busiest and happiest of all. Although he would take no credit to himself, we must have fared poorly without him. He was tireless with axe and saw. . In one minute I would think that his greatest genius lay in his broad back and mighty limbs; in the next minute he would surprise me with some well-planned device which showed genius to lurk within his round head also.

When our clearings were made upon the top of the low hill, we selected strong sound logs, trimming them into shape and matching them as well as we were able. Then we dug trenches in the form of the outer walls of our buildings, paving the bottoms of the trenches with broad flat stones from the river-bed, until we had a secure foundation. Then our logs were set upon end in the trenches, in two rows, the inner row covering the chinks of the outer, and after that the earth was filled into the trenches, and packed down tightly. When the walls had been plentifully mud-plastered, they were safe

and secure, proof against any weather,—and better still, no doubt, proof against bullets, if such should chance to come our way. Though we were justifiably proud of our work, there was no time for any show of pride. From lighter and slender logs we fashioned the roofs of our buildings. The roofs were also plastered with mud, mixed with twigs and grasses for strength's sake, and over all was placed a thatching of the rank grass stems, woven firmly together, making a roof that would stand storms or fire. Nor was that all:

"If there's goin' to be any shootin' done, we want to have a hand in it, don't we?" McCulloch suggested. "We've got to fix for that, pardners." And so we cut small gun-ways through the thick walls, not large enough to be dangerous for those within, but allowing us to use our own weapons toward all points of the compass. When this work was finished, it was doubtful whether our buildings were better adapted to be abodes of peace or hatcheries of war. I was a little inclined to laugh at their formidable aspect, but McCulloch was not abashed.

"Laugh, of course, if it tickles you," he

said in his broad good-nature. "I'll do my laughing by and by, mebbe, when we have to stand off one of those rowdy outfits from over the river,—twenty or thirty against us four. How do you think you'd feel then, without thick walls and gun-ports? Inside of this place, when we get the doors and windows fixed the way I'll show you, we can hold our own against as many as can get on the outside, unless they bring cannon. There's lots of folks that'll be sorry they didn't build this way; you mark what I tell you."

Barns and sheds were made, too, after the same substantial pattern, though they were less warlike in purpose and appearance. When all was done, so that we had time to look about us and think of what had been accomplished, we were well satisfied. Our work gave assurance that we had come to stay;—that we were no longer aliens, but entitled to the honours of full citizenship.

While the hard work of building had been going forward, we had lived like a big family; the men working together, helping one another as need arose, and the two women attending to the out-door kitchen under the

friendly trees,—not the lightest share of work, for our appetites kept pace with our labours, and sound health attended upon all. It was a generous life, already amply rewarded. Each one of us learned to rely more and more not only upon himself, but upon the others. Labour and sacrifice and danger are well repaid when a man finds that he can place full trust in his fellows, with no fear of their failing him.

As the days passed I was filled with sharp sorrow for that first speech of mine to Elizabeth concerning the unwisdom of women taking part in this pilgrimage. She was a hundred times stronger and braver than I; —not alone in the big things, but in the little things of daily trial, which are the real trials after all. A mountain of adversity may beautify a life-landscape; the outlook from its summit may reveal things undreamed of in the peaceful valley. Such a mountain is no hardship; it is the tiny dust-grains of trivial worry blown into our eyes which test temper and endurance. In those matters Elizabeth showed courage sadly wanting in myself. Gladly would I have undone that harsh speech of mine, if I could; but I had

to content myself with confession of its injustice, letting her see that I was truly repentant.

And thus, while we worked, the weeks passed and winter was at hand. We were quite secluded from the world and its activities,—almost castaways, hearing no news, and knowing nothing of what had been happening. We were not far from Lawrence, to be sure, but our claims were away from the main trails, and we saw no one. But though we worked in outward and undisturbed quiet, our thoughts were not at peace; nor could they be until we knew what had been going forward in the territory and in the nation. Portentous things might and must have happened. But preparations against approaching winter seemed the greatest present demand upon us: news-gathering must be put off.

We were not idly curious. Our own welfare hung in a light balance. When we had entered the territory, the administration of affairs had been practically lawless, save as the settlers chose to regard the principles of natural justice and equity; and no one cared to venture a prediction whether that would

continue, once the thin tissue of novelty had been worn away, leaving the threadbare fabric of dull reality. There were many threats which the future held in suspense. It might be a matter of but a short time until force would rule us; for in the judgment of many in such troubled times, force is considered more feasible than equity. In McCulloch's forecast of events, force and violence were to be the mace and scepter of our enemies of the Blue Lodges.

But at last our work was done. We had built well, and the rigours of severest winter could visit no surprise upon us. We were safe, secure and comfortable, save that our great appetites had made sad inroads upon our store of provisions, which must be replenished ere winter enclosed us. But that was cause for no anxiety, for the roads were still open, and the weather milder than we had expected, though December was upon us. We determined then that our need for food, added to our need for news, should prompt a trip to Lawrence with one of our wagons.

McCulloch was eager to go;—an eagerness which I at first laid to the charge of his

boyish spirit of impatience with monotony and his love of exciting change; but I was not long in seeing that I wronged him in that, as I had already wronged him in so many ways when I had judged him by first appearances. While we were discussing plans, he made occasion to speak with me apart.

"Look here, Pokey; you've got to let me go. Look at it sensible, can't you? We've been here two months, an' how do you know what's happened? A wagon may have a hot time getting to Lawrence an' back. It looks to me like it'd be foolish to send one of you fellows in, that don't know the country like I do. The safest way is goin' to be to keep away from the trails, and go across country, until I can find out about things. I ain't scared, understand,—don't you never think that; but I ain't goin' to risk losin' horses an' wagon, that's all. I tell you I've got to go."

"Well," I said; "but you must take some one with you. We'll go together; or you can take one of the other men, if that suits you better."

He shook his head strongly. "No," he

answered. "One man's as good as two;—better, because we've only got four altogether. I can make it alone, if anybody can. I ain't braggin' now, Pokey; I'm only talkin' sense. You can trust me, can't you?"

Trust him! He was so much in earnest that there was no room for doubt. While he was in that mood I would have relied upon him to drive his wagon around the world, if need required.

"Well," he said, when he saw my resistance evaporating, "then that's settled, is it? You fix it with the others, an' I'll pull out in the morning."

And thus it was arranged, without strong demur upon the part of any one. When he had promised to carry the matter through, we did not doubt that he would do it, and gave ourselves to aiding him in preparation for his going.

V

CHAPTER XIII

A NEW ELEMENT

THROUGH our weeks of labour I had had no time for thought. I had been wholly lost and abandoned in the need and duty of each present moment. Though work was sweet to us, it had been very hard. All day long our muscles strained to their uttermost with the heavy logs, so that we were worn and beaten into weariness, with tired senses longing for nightfall, when we could sleep the deep sleep of utter exhaustion. But on this night, when I had done with helping McCulloch, and all was in readiness for the morning, I wrapped myself warmly for protection against the chill of the night, and sat down upon the rude bench that we had built at the front of our house. There were some practical concerns that must have thoughtful attention,—concerns of dollars and acres. And I began very well; but soon, without knowing how

it came about, without caring why, I was deep in thought of Elizabeth.

I loved her; so much I knew with a certainty that shamed the security of all my other knowledge, save the knowledge that she was worthy of a love based upon the best of all that is good in manhood. The love that a man cherishes for a true and pure woman becomes very strange and wonderful to him, when he thinks of it calmly. He may not say surely when it had its birth, any more than he may date his other thoughts; he may only say that it has become a part of himself, and that he cannot put it away from him. When I tried on that night to find my way back to the time when love began, I could not do it; it seemed older than memory,—as though from the first my life had been in some mysterious way directed and shaped toward the time when I should love this girl. There had been small chance of late for talking with her, or for seeing her alone; there was no need for that, for speech is but a sorry means to such an end as love. I did not know,—I dared not try to think what would come of it. Until that night I had hardly dared make clear confession even

to my own heart that I loved her ; but then, when I would have told myself that it was true, I saw that there was no need for that, either. There was no need for anything beyond making surrender of myself to the certainty that love possessed me, and that the wild wide night was witness to the truth.

And then, when I had found that out, and was trying to grow accustomed to the wonder of it all, I was quite lost to everything else. I must have sat in that way for a long time, thinking of my beloved and comforting myself with little tricks of fancy,—dwelling upon her sweetness and gentleness, the calm beauty of her eyes, and the soft loveliness of her voice, as a man will. Then all at once like a dream within a dream, I heard her voice quite near me, and when I had aroused myself somewhat I could see in the deep twilight that she and McCulloch stood together only a few steps away. I was so startled by the sudden awakening that I did not think of moving, but sat still where I was and heard what they said.

“So you are to be the one to go?” she asked.

“Yes, I’m goin,’ ” he answered lightly.

"I'm glad I run acrost you, too. I wanted to see you before I got away. I was goin' to ask you to let me do something for you in the town."

"Something for me?" she repeated.
"What is it?"

"Oh, I don't care what. Anything you think about. I'd like to do something for you; that's all."

She laughed gaily,—a little ripple of delighted enjoyment of his frank gallantry. She was never under constraint when she talked with him, and he seemed always to like that way. But this time he did not laugh with her.

"Say, I ain't jokin'," he urged; and I knew that he spoke the truth, for his voice carried the deep resonant note which I had grown to love so well. "I mean just what I say, Eliz'beth; I want to do somethin' for you, an' I want you to tell me to do it."

"Forgive me," she said gently; "I didn't mean to be rude."

"You couldn't," he answered. "'Tain't in you, like 'tis in other folks. You're different from everybody else I know, ex-

cept Mam. Mam's the only one I ever saw that I like better than I like you."

She made no answer to that; and when McCulloch spoke again, it was with an effort at lighter manner. "That ain't what I was goin' to say. But I ain't sorry I said it, you know. You've just got to tell me to do somethin' for you, an' I won't quit botherin' you till you do."

"You can't please me in any way any better than by bringing yourself safely back to us," she said in the same gentle way. I heard that his breath was sharply indrawn, after the manner of one who suffers a shock of cold, and his answer was quite as sharp:

"Oh, Lord! What's the use sayin' things like that?"

"Why shouldn't I say it?" she asked simply; "don't you think it's true?"

"Eliz'beth!" he cried in a voice which I did not know as his, so hard and strained it was. "What you think I'm made of?" He was bravely struggling for control. "I wish you'd go away!" he burst forth at last; "I can't. 'Tain't in me to run away from anything; not even this."

No doubt the poor girl was startled by

such strange speech. She turned without a word, and would have left him, but he called to her impetuously: "Eliz'beth! wait a minute!" He stepped to her side, then spoke more quietly, as though for reassurance: "You don't need to be scared. I wasn't goin' to say much:—yes, I was, too; but not to scare you. I was goin' to say a heap. Oh, Eliz'beth, listen!" And though he seemed quite himself again, his voice was of fathomless depth. "I don't know for the life of me which is most like a coward,—to talk, or to keep still. I've got to talk, I reckon, whether I want to or not. I ain't sure a man's got any business to keep still, not if he's honest, when he—when he—feels like I do about you."

Why it was I cannot say; but my heart held no fear while I listened, but only sorrow and pity, and the wish to comfort him; for I thought that he must feel quite wretched and hopeless. And I felt pity for the girl, too, in the face of such rude way of speaking as his. Most people at such times find refuge and protection behind light breastworks of words; but there was no such refuge for him, who knew nothing of for-

mality or subterfuge. He had to speak the plain truth in a plain way, if he spoke at all.

"Archy, what is it?" she asked softly. "Have I done anything to hurt you?"

"You!" he cried with a short laugh. Then he suddenly struck his open hands together, and held them locked fast. "Oh!" he cried passionately; "I wish I was different! I wish I was a man,—the kind of a man Pokey is! You love Pokey, don't you?"

"Archy! Hush!" she cried in sharp pain, and I felt my face flushing hot. For very shame I wished myself away; but I feared to move. I could do nothing but sit still where I was and wait for what came next.

"I can't hush," he said. "I've got to talk. Tell the wind to hush, an' mebbe it would; I can't. 'Tain't goin' to do you no hurt, an' it's goin' to do me a heap of good to tell you just this once, honest, I love you. There!" he cried, when involuntarily she shrunk away from him. "There! that's all. I ain't ever goin' to say it again; don't you be afraid. I had to tell you. An' now you're told, so you can't ever forget, not if you tried. You ain't one of the kind that forgets such things." There came a throbbing pause

then, which must have seemed to him like a reproof, for when he spoke again it was in a tone of pleading apology. "That ain't so bad, is it? I hoped you wouldn't feel bad about it. When even a dog loves you, you like to know it, don't you? I do."

She gave a sharp inarticulate cry of protest, and I saw that she grasped at his clenched hands, holding them fast in her own. "Oh, Archy! Don't!" she breathed. Upon sudden impulse she lifted one of his great hands to her lips, then laid her cheek against it. But he pulled his hand away, trying to laugh,—a feeble little laugh that died in birth.

"Lord A'mighty!" he sighed almost inaudibly. "This here ain't no place for me. I'd better be greasin' my harness. You trot along, Eliz'beth, an' go to bed. It's time you was asleep. I ain't goin' to talk to you no more."

"Archy!" she said again, oh so gently. "Dear Archy, if I could only say—"

His laugh was stronger and braver then. "Don't you say it, old lady. What's the use? You ought to have more sense. Shucks! I oughtn't to have worried you;

but seemed like I couldn't help it. Look here; you mustn't feel that way about it. You an' me's got to be good friends; that's all. Don't you ever dare forget that."

All fear had left her. She stood close to him, lifting her hands to lay them upon his broad shoulders, while her face was turned to his. But he held his head erect, standing straight and firm as the strongest tree in the woodland beyond, his hands folded together at his back.

"Say," he said slowly; "there's one thing needs straightening yet. You mustn't think I ain't bein' fair with Pokey. Him an' me's pardners. I love Pokey, an' so do you, don't you?"

But at that she turned quickly away and left him. He made no attempt to follow her, nor did he try to speak again. He stood without moving until she had passed from sight into the deep night shadows,—until the sounds of her footsteps had died away,—until she opened the door of her home, letting a beam of light flash out into the night, to reveal her form for an instant before she vanished, closing the door after her. Still he stood motionless, while my

heart measured many slow seconds. I longed to go to him, but a weight of irresolution was upon me. Suddenly he raised his arms above his head, holding them outstretched to the sky, and turning his face upward, so that it showed haggard and pale in the wan starlight.

“Oh!” he groaned. “Why ain’t I different!” But that did not last. In a moment he recovered himself and walked slowly away toward the stables at the back of the clearing. Though I lay awake for a long time in my bed, he did not come into the house. I thought of him at first, and my thoughts were full of wonder and compassion; but I was thinking of Elizabeth when at last I fell asleep, and my fitful dreams were of her, not of him.

Before dawn of the chill morning I was aroused by the gentle weight of his hand upon my shoulder, and by the flare and flicker of a candle he carried. He was already dressed, and when I started up in bed I saw that his own bed had been undisturbed through the night. His eyes were sunken and his face pale and worn, but he spoke in his usual cheery manner:

"How you do sleep! I've made noise enough here to wake up old Adam. Breakfast's nearly ready; you better get dressed quick. I want to start early, so as to go as far as I can before folks begin to travel."

A bright fire was blazing in our wide fireplace in the outer room. Water was singing in the kettle, and the cabin was filled with the grateful scent and sound of frying bacon. With the aid of plenty of cold water I was soon awake, and I dressed rapidly. Our simple breakfast was awaiting me. McCulloch was already in his place, drinking strong black coffee with much apparent relish.

"That's the stuff to wake a body up!" he said when his tin pint-cup was emptied. The hand that lifted the steaming pot to refill his cup was trembling. He ate nothing, though I urged his need for fortifying himself for the cold journey.

"Too early," he said briefly. "Don't you worry; I'll take a little snack with me, to eat by and by, and I'll cook something hot at noon. I'll be in Lawrence some time tonight, you know."

After that, though we made determined

efforts to talk of the affairs before us, we bungled sadly. I saw that he was very tired; and my own thoughts would go wandering in unfamiliar places, where speech dared not follow. Soon he pushed his chair away from the table and began buttoning his heavy coat around him.

“Don’t hurry,” he said. “There’s no need for you to go out yet. I’ve got the horses fed, an’ the harness on ‘em, all ready to put ‘em in the wagon. You sit still an’ eat.” But I arose and went with him to the stable, and together we attended to the few last details. When everything was ready, he stood beside me for a moment, holding his lantern aloft so that its light fell full upon my face. He laid his free arm over my shoulders, holding me against his breast in his impulsive caressing way, and laughing lightly.

“Good-by, Pardner Pokey,” he said. “Now don’t you get uneasy. You know there ain’t nothin’ to worry about, only it’s a good thing not to risk being surprised. I’ve got my rifle an’ a couple of pistols handy, under the hay in the bottom of the wagon. They won’t catch me asleep. I

ought to be back in four days, anyway; but don't you get scared if I don't come for a day or two more. I may want to drive a good ways off the trail, if I find it's safer. Good-by; an' tell the rest of 'em good-by for me, will you?"

He lowered his lantern and stood for a little time in silence, patting my shoulder gently with his heavy hand. I dreaded that he would speak of Elizabeth; but if he thought of it at all, he gave it up.

"Good-by," he called again from his seat; and then the wagon passed away into the shadows, and became one with them.

CHAPTER XIV

TO ARMS

ALTHOUGH our hardest work was done, there were still many little things to claim us. We had made up our minds that if we would deserve success in our new life, no moment of daylight should find us idle, and we all worked with a will at those odds and ends which lie ever ready to the hand of the farmer, in all seasons. I had thought that I should miss McCulloch in his absence; but I found the day passing very quickly, with both muscle and mind so busy.

In the dull gray mid-afternoon, while I worked upon our pile of firewood,—swinging my axe with a lusty willingness, to keep off the cold, I was all at once startled by a far-off shout, rising again and again with much urgency. When I straightened myself and looked around, I saw a horse flying toward the clearing, across the open prairie, a man mounted upon its back, swinging his arms over his head wildly, and shout-

ing. He was not long in coming so near that I could see it was McCulloch, and that he was riding one of the horses taken from the wagon. A part of the beast's harness was still upon it, the loosened ends of the straps flyng and flapping, and the animal's breath made quick little puffs of white vapour. It ran with the short uneven gait of an animal far spent. McCulloch was a sore burden for the strongest horse in a gallop over wild prairie.

McCulloch sat in his seat like one half-drunk, swaying from side to side. He kept no hold of rein, but was using both freed arms to emphasize and point his shouting. His hat was gone, and his outer coat was spread beneath him for a saddle. I was deeply alarmed, though his shouts seemed exultant. But suspense was not long continued, for with his booted feet McCulloch was urging the poor beast to do its best, and he soon drew so near that he could call to me articulately.

"Glory, glory, glory!" he roared. "Hell's popped wide open, Pardner,—it has, sure! We're goin' to have some fightin' at last!"

His face was radiant. He threw himself

to the ground, staggering against me breathlessly, and hugging me tight in his mighty arms.

"What is it you say?" I cried. "Let go of me, Archy, and talk like a sane man."

"Oh, it's true!" he gasped, capering about like a pleased child, with me in his arms. My strength was of no use against his, while he chose to hold me. "I found out from a fellow that's riding across to stir up some Free Soilers above here. Every man that can carry a gun's wanted in Lawrence right off! Oh, I ain't foolin'! We'll have a Glory Hallelujah time, Pokey, you an' me. I swear, it makes me glad I'm alive, just to think about it!"

"But, Archy!" I persisted, getting clear of his embrace at last, and grasping his wrists firmly. "Tell me what you mean, man! What is it?"

He motioned that I should follow, and strode into our house, where he threw himself down upon his bed, stretching out his arms and legs in an excess of complete weariness, his broad chest heaving as he strove to regain his spent breath.

"Oh!" he cried again, as though that was

all he could say. He lay there, panting, and laughing foolishly sometimes, until he had recovered his senses and his breath together. Then he sat upright upon the bed's edge, his broad face flushing with excitement while he talked.

"Pokey, Pokey! but the things that have happened since we've been shut up in here! You don't know! It's the Blue Lodges again that's doin' it. They hate Lawrence like they hate the devil;—worse, because the devil's a friend of their'n. They've just been waitin' their chance, an' now they think it's come. Old Goliah thought so, too, didn't he? that time when he run up against David. That's the kind of a time we're goin' to have. Oh, it'll be splendid!"

"Archy!" I demanded; "what are you talking of? Have you gone altogether daft?"

"Yes!" he shouted exultantly. "Plum wild crazy; that's what I am! You would be, too, if you only knew." He bounced up from his seat upon the bed and ran to me, giving me another fierce hug. "Look here, now," he said, with a determined effort to be rational and coherent: "there's goin' to

be real fightin', down to Lawrence. There was some folks got mixed up in a murder, and the sheriff had a Free Soil prisoner, takin' him down to Lecompton, makin' his brags about what they was goin' to do. But the prisoner was stole away from Mr. Sheriff, an' taken down to Lawrence. That's what's made the trouble. The sheriff called on the governor for militia to help. Militia! In Kansas! Ain't that rich? We know where the 'militia's' comin' from, an' so do the Lawrence folks, an' they ain't goin' to stand it. There's a thousand 'militia' camped down to Franklin right now, an' more comin'. That messenger told me they're comin' fixed to fight, too. They've got two cannon, an' they've stole all kinds of arms from an arsenal. With the most the Free Soilers can get together, the Blue Lodges'll have three to one. I wish it was six to one; that'd be just about right to give us a good fight. Oh, Pokey, Pokey! It's great!"

He could not tell much more than that, though the others of our party gathered in our house and plied him with questions; he could only urge upon us that we be prompt in getting ready to go to the aid of the be-

sieged town ; and we soon put curiosity away from us and began to form our preparations. There was no whisper of personal prudence raised among us,—a thing I was glad to remember afterward. We did not think of it at all ; we were only anxious to give quick answer to the call of need.

Preparations were not elaborate. In less than an hour we were ready. We had only to see that our arms were in order, and to improvise blanket saddles for the horses. Three of us were to go, leaving the women and the older man behind, to care for our possessions. None had any wish to stay, now that the chance for action was ripening,—Elizabeth least of all, as I could plainly see ; though she yielded to sober counsels. McCulloch had left his wagon and his free horse in a place of safety, where he might reach them some time before midnight, if we rode well ; and we meant to waste no time.

We had plenty of company when we found the trail ; for the alarm had been quickly spread abroad through the wide prairie neighbourhood, and the settlers gave ready response. With our numbers there was no necessity for avoiding the main trav-

elled ways, and by the next midday we were in Lawrence, face to face with masked destiny.

From all the country around the people had gathered, five hundred strong. The town was alive with armed men, and bustling with active effort to prepare for defense,—for they meant to do nothing more than defend their rights. The arms were various and for the most part old fashioned and poor; but the spirit of the men was of that sort which is never out of fashion when there is a stern duty to be done. Some there were, of course, who bore themselves with a manner of doubt, and even with white-faced fear, but they were no large part of the company; the greater number showed ruddy and clear-eyed courage, though the outlook was not such as to beget confidence. Rumor said that the invading enemies of the town then in camp a few miles away were of three times our number, well equipped with rifles and even with heavier weapons,—worse than all, with many days' supply of liquor. Attack was almost hourly expected; none could say why it had been so long delayed. Meanwhile, defensive earthworks were

growing hour by hour under willing hands; men were drilling under their chosen leaders; and women, too, were busied in a hundred ways, cooking, moulding bullets,—some even bearing arms, begging to take their places in the ranks with the soldiers. It was a sight very good to look upon.

Upon the main street of the town there stood a building of stone, not yet completed, but since crowned with fame,—the Free State Hotel. To that place we were directed, when we inquired for the headquarters of the militiamen, and thither we went to report ourselves for duty.

CHAPTER XV

OLD JOHN BROWN

As we drew near we saw a curious spectacle. Many men were gathered around the front of the hotel, regarding with wondering eyes a wagon which had arrived just before our own. There were six or seven men within it, all heavily armed, and of themselves enough to attract attention at such a time, when men were so sorely needed. But it was the wagon that formed the chief interest. Around its sides many poles were set upright, and to the top of each there was fastened a weapon,—sword, bayonet or pistol, making the whole to look most warlike and imposing. When the driver of the strange vehicle drew rein before the hotel, a hearty cheer went up from the assemblage, and we hastened to join the throng, anxious to see what manner of men the newcomers might be.

All were young save one. His shoulders were a little stooped, though age sat lightly

upon him. His figure was firm, and above middle height, and every movement gave promise of agile strength. Although I could see so little of him as yet, I felt a strange attraction toward him, and pushed my way forward so that I might see his face and form clearer judgment concerning him.

As I reached the side of the wagon, he sprang lightly to the ground, and for a brief time we stood regarding one another intently,—for so short a time as might have been required for speaking ten words, though there were no words that passed between us. I knew that I was living to some purpose while those eyes were fixed upon me, for a sincere and dauntless soul looked out of them. His face was clean shaven, showing every line upon it, and every line was full of meaning. Calm dignity of thought marked the wide forehead, sheltered by shaggy hair; the firm lips showed perfect control and mastery of self; but the beautiful eyes I loved best, for in them there blazed a will so mighty that no earthly circumstance could subdue it or turn it from its way. There was no expression of softness upon the face as I looked at it then; but that was

not a time for softness. It was the face of one who knew beyond all doubt what manhood meant, and who was living up to his knowledge. It was the face of one who had heard the voice of God speaking to him, directing his ways, and whose greatest earthly glory it was to yield obedience to his Lord's command and do His will. Old John Brown!

And men have called him mad. No doubt he was, when measured by those earthly standards which account all men as fools or mad whose every thought and impulse and act is not concerned with self. No doubt he was mad as all must be who are compelled to listen at once to the voice of God and to the Babel of earthly tongues. Yes, no doubt he was mad, in the view of such as cried against a certain holy Nazarene that he had a devil. But I thank God that I have met face to face with one heaven-born and heaven-directed madman. This world is far poorer since he left it,—a poverty that may not be mended.

But I have lost my way, and have wandered far from the course of my tale.

While I stood there in the street, looking,

looking, and not getting enough of looking at that master's face, some one touched me upon the shoulder, and a deep voice said: "Pokey! My boy! Thank God!" And there was John Hale at my side. Oh, that was a blessed day!

He had grown much older in appearance since last I had seen him. His big beard was streaked with gray, and there was a mottling of gray upon his temples. But those things do not count for much in such a man; his eyes were full of that fire which only death can smother; the smile that lay upon his face was like a pledge of eternal youth.

"I made sure that I should find you, dear," he said, speaking as though I was still a child; and indeed I had a child's joy while I stood before him, holding his hand, and knowing that he lived and that all was well with him.

"Yes," I answered, when I could find the power of speech; "I could not stay behind."

"A great big boy you have grown to be, too," he said, running his eyes over my bulk.

"Big enough, I hope, to fill a large place in the ranks here," I laughed. "Does it look serious?"

“Serious enough!” he answered soberly; “serious enough. No one can say what is ahead; though we shall no doubt give a good account of ourselves.”

He had not much to tell of himself, beyond the plain facts that he and his family had fared well in the new territory, and that he had taken part in many of those conflicts which were now history. He asked a few questions concerning my own life and experience in Kansas, and seemed well pleased when he knew the most essential parts of what I had to tell him. “We shall make this into a beautiful land,” he said confidently, “and one fit for God to look upon with pleasure. It is so written, Pokey; we must believe it. Justice will be done; it is beyond human power to prevent that.” I know that he believed what he said.

He had formed some acquaintance already with John Brown, and of that he gave me the benefit. Before very long we were upon terms of such friendship as the stress of circumstances required.

The martial appearance of John Brown and his men gave them much prestige in the beleaguered town, though they were modest

in taking the forward places assigned to them. Among the best armed of those who had assembled, a new militia company was at once formed, and of this company Brown was made captain. Archy, John Hale and I were selected for service under him. We lost no time, once we had been assigned to duty. Our captain soon had us in company formation, drilling us in the arms-manual and instructing us in some of the plainer things of warfare. No doubt those were matters of which a fighting man should have some knowledge, though they were of less service to us, both then and thereafter, than another lesson which he seemed ordained to teach,—the great lesson of manly self-reliance and heroic self-sacrifice in one. He did his best to make us believe that we were to fight for a just cause, and that therefore God had decreed us victorious,—a strange way of thinking in this latter time, and a way almost gone out of style, though nothing could shake his simple faith or move his steadfast will. Doubt had no place in his mind, while there was a duty waiting to be done; and he tried to teach us so, while instructing us in the use of our rifles. But for the most part

the men were slow to learn the higher lesson, having greater confidence in their weapons than in themselves.

Soon he had learned the temper of the men under his command, as well as the exigencies of the time; then he was impatient for action,—impatient to strike a blow. We had been waiting in hourly expectation that the invaders would advance upon us, when they had discovered our inferiority in numbers and arms; but the passing hours bore nothing more trying than our own suspense. Delay was not to Brown's liking, nor would he give ear to the counsels of caution urged upon him by those who knew the strength of the force we should have to combat.

“You are ignorant of the ways of the Lord,” he said to such as tried to discourage him in his plan. “The time is ripe. The Lord does not temporize with evil, and neither can I, who am appointed by Him to do this work. We shall go down and smite in His name, and even my little band shall have victory.” And indeed those of the command who had come to know him and to know themselves were as impatient as he, and as unwilling to be restrained for policy’s

sake. But we were made to suffer disappointment.

A Council of Safety there was in the town, formed of those men whose political craft had been tried and proven. Their desire was to secure peace, rather than victory;—to sacrifice honour for peace, rather than to risk defeat for victory. The inexorable spirit of John Brown, whom they soon called fanatic, kept the Council in a constant dumb ague of terror, while they kept him in constant wrath. When his plan was formed for making an attack upon the invaders' camp, the Council appealed to the chief officers of the militia to check his mad design, and to prevent the conflict which the committee dreaded;—for it was a Council of Fear, strong in the faith that safety lay only in non-resistance. I remember that there were several visits of those men to our captain, which came to nothing. We were going on with preparations for attack, when at last General Lane appeared in person, attended by a few of his adherents. He was a man of well-known and often-tried political cunning, and of such composite character that although he was wholly false to principle and

full of low hypocrisy, he had persuaded the people to think him genuine and true. But that is no very hard task at any time; for we sons of earth are after all a simple-minded lot, and easily deceived by appearances. Lane and his party came to seek Brown, while we were drilling, and to make a final effort to thwart his purpose; and when I looked them over, from my place in the ranks, to see what they might be like who would try to overawe this doughty old Puritan, among the foremost of them I descried Blinky Meade, his dimples sunk into wrinkles of perplexity, his dreamy brown eyes clouded with doubt and anxiety. When I knew that he was likely to try his tongue upon the unchangeable spirit of our leader, I kept my ears open.

Lane spoke with a great show of blustering authority, giving an emphatic order of obedience to his direction that the attack upon Franklin be abandoned; but as well might he have tried to exercise his authority upon the north wind. Brown listened in silence for a time; but it was a silence which we knew could not endure for very long.

“I deny all military authority over me,

unless you give me an order to fight," he cried at last hotly. "My master is the Lord. I shall obey none but Him, and His orders I have already received."

"Your course would be the sheerest folly," Lane answered with the hasty impatience of one who was not much concerned with questions of heavenly dominion in earthly affairs. "What can you hope to do, with fifty men against fifteen hundred? You can do nothing beyond involving us all in ruin and loss."

Brown's great grey eyes were blazing with the wrath that such speech would excite in him.

"I should think myself ruined and lost beyond all salvation," he cried, "if I should fail to carry out the trust which the Lord has reposed in me. I cannot listen to the counsels of such cowardice as yours, and I will not obey your orders."

While he spoke thus so briefly, the old hero held his drawn sword before him, making use of it in strong gestures. When he had said the last word, he returned the blade to its scabbard, and then the two men stood face to face, their eyes meeting in a silent

war of one will against the other. They were Lane's eyes that dropped at last, while he turned away to speak with those who attended him. He seemed to rely upon Blinky Meade; for to him he spoke a few low syllables, as though urging him to use what skill of argument he possessed against this rebellious captain, who was so far beyond the reach of discipline. And Blinky was not one to allow such chance to escape him, as I well knew.

"It is not our wish, here in Lawrence, to provoke strife," he said smoothly. "We wish to preserve peace. It was to that end that our call for aid was sent abroad. You forget that you were summoned here for the protection of our interests."

A faint smile moved the grim old lips for a moment, while Brown looked into Blinky's face,—as though that face was an open page which held something amusing. "Interest!" Brown echoed. "That seems to be a mighty word, sir, in this time. But I am called to serve a stronger interest than yours, which is an interest of dollars. Dollars against righteousness!"

"Our interests are for peace," Blinky persisted.

"Peace!" John Brown repeated again. "Peace to what end? What will you do with peace?"

"Peace for the enjoyment of our liberties," Blinky answered. "We have made homes for ourselves here; we desire to preserve and enjoy them. We seek no conflict." But Brown held up his hand with a sharp gesture of remonstrance and dissent.

"Words! Words!" he cried. "You are faithless to your calling, sir;—faithless to your duty as a man! Peace bought with the coin of cowardice is not peace at all. There can be no peace save that which attends upon righteousness; and when righteousness makes compromises with evil, it is no longer righteousness, but becomes itself a thing of the devil. You need talk to me no more, for we cannot agree."

Blinky's face grew fiery red with the unlovely flush of wounded vanity. I knew very well that he was not to be converted by the means of plain, honest words like Brown's. His manner was stiff with pride when he tried to answer: "You assume a great deal

when you place your own notions above the convictions of all the rest of us. We *have* material interests to guard, while you have no concern beyond the gratification of a wildly foolish whim. We have a right to insist that you listen to our reasons and observe our wishes."

It was Brown's turn to grow flushed of face; but his was a flush of passionate indignation. "I waste time in talking to you!" he cried. "I might as well talk to the decaying stump of a dead tree. Though you call yourself a servant of the Lord, you betray Him when you set your own vaunted concerns against your duty. I will observe the wish of none but God, whose command I have clearly heard; and it is a command to strike at the oppressors of freedom. You fear a loss of dollars; I do not fear even death. A man dies but once, and when his time comes; I would account it blessed in the Lord's service. I will strike according to His order, if my men will stand by me."

When it was so clearly seen that the granite will of the old man would yield in no degree to persuasion, command or threat, and that he would not lose sight of what he

thought to be his higher call, General Lane signified to Blinky that he should abandon argument; which he did willingly, though with a manner of childish angry petulance. Then Lane spoke to us who formed Brown's company, as though he had received a prompting from Brown's last words.

"Because of the disobedience of your captain to the orders of his superiors," he said, "it becomes my duty to command you that you take no part in any lawless expedition of violence and disorder, under pain of such punishment as may be visited upon you by the constituted authorities. As a part of the military forces summoned for the protection of the town, you will be hereafter subject to my direction. I caution you for your own safety, as well as for the general good, to remember what I say." Then he turned with his aids and left us, while our captain stood with his chin sunk upon his breast, his eyes bent to the ground, as though he had suffered a personal shame.

It was plain that Lane's words had wrought their intended effect in some of the less courageous hearts; for it is always easy, in any time and place, to find men who are

more ready to heed the idlest threat than to follow the strongest call of duty. The greater number of those in our company turned fearful, and their purpose lagged. And soon after, when it became known that the Council of Safety had dispatched a messenger to bring the governor of the territory from Shawnee Mission to Lawrence, and that they meant to employ his offices in effecting a compromise with the Missouri invaders, John Brown hopelessly abandoned his intentions, and fell into disheartened apathy.

CHAPTER XVI

A PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

STRANGE works are wrought in the name of Safety! as we found when the governor arrived in Lawrence. He was a very weak man,—weak because of his strong faith, so popular at that time, that Policy is the most effective means of dealing with men. When he was with the Council he was made drunk, and while he was in that helpless condition, the terms of peace were settled. It was soon known to us that the compromise was a thing of fact, and that the siege of Lawrence would be raised. Brown's voice was lifted in solemn protest; but his protest was passed idly by. The people were too busy with congratulating one another upon their escape from danger; they had no time to give attention to the vagaries of any latter-day voice crying in the wilderness.

But this was not to the liking of Archy McCulloch. When we knew that peace would reign once more, he brooded upon the

matter for a time in silence; then he sought me.

"Pokey, this won't do," he said earnestly. "What kind of a way is this to act? This is the first chance we've had to look Missouri in the face, and I'd hoped—Well, Dad's down there to Franklin; I know he is. It kind o' seems like I'm to blame, myself, for this backin' down. I tell you what; I've got to go down there to Franklin and take a look at them fellows. I've just *got* to; an' I'm a-goin' to-night, soon as it's dark, before they get away."

I could not help smiling; the scheme was so wild, so foolhardy, yet so altogether in harmony with his dominant humour, "Archy," I said; "I must have a guardian appointed to take care of you."

He laughed with careless good nature. "Oh, I picked him out long ago. What else are you? That's why I'm talkin' to you now;—you've got to come along with me an' look after me." He paused for a moment, studying my face for signs; then went on in his most candid manner of persuasive simplicity: "I just can't go back home, after bein' so near to them folks from over the

river, without takin' a squint at 'em. Of course, there's Dad; I want to see him, you know,—that's natural. And then there's bound to be others with the crowd, that I know. I—I'm kind o' homesick to see 'em. An' then, Pardner, there's little old Mammy; it's months since I've heard anything about her. I can't stand it no longer; I've got to take some chances, an' try to find out something about her."

"Well, Archy," I was constrained to say after a little of futile argument; "I'll go with you. Do you want any others?"

"No. You an' me's enough. More would hinder, instead of helpin'. A big party couldn't get in past the picket lines without bein' caught. An' we know too much already about the kind of stuff these fellows here are made of;—a lot of wood dummies, instead of men. You an' me'll be enough. We'll just sneak in quiet, an' mebbe we can get close enough to see what's goin' on, an' who's there."

We took no one into our confidence concerning the trip, save John Brown and Hale. As we talked to Brown briefly, and explained the reasons for our going, his rug-

ged face was alight with appreciation and encouragement. "With fifty men like you two, I could route the whole horde!" he cried. And yet our plan was simple and unpraiseworthy.

We started in the early evening, going quietly and by a roundabout way until we had passed beyond chance of interference from those in the town who were now so certain of the end of the trouble. We knew that they would not suffer us to go, if they guessed our errand. We rode two of our best horses, meaning to make the last part of the journey on foot, to be sure of passing undiscovered through such lines of sentries as might still be maintained on the outskirts of the town where the invaders were camped. It was a cheerless ride, and must have discouraged us if we had not been in earnest. As the night deepened, a heavy rain fell persistently, and a bleak wind blew the rain into our faces, making it sting with harsh needles of cold. The winter chill bit at our hands, and even found its way into our blood, so that we could with difficulty keep to our seats and guide our fretful beasts. Yet when we talked of it, we dis-

covered that the weather was in our favour; for on such a night, those from whom we had to fear molestation would be apt to seek such shelter as they could find, letting the outer world care for itself. This followed our wish exactly; for when we had passed a little way beyond the river, the roads were unfamiliar, and heavy with mud and slush, so that our horses' splashing steps must have betrayed us for a long distance, if there had been any abroad to hear.

After the last ray of twilight had been sunk and lost in inky blackness of night, and we could no longer see the roadway, we trusted to our horses, allowing them to choose their own way of going. We were sure of nothing, save that we were passing toward Franklin; for in the distance we could see that the low-hanging clouds were ruddy with the reflected glow of the enemy's camp. We had to take all the rest for granted.

Such mode of travel did not encourage speech; we had quite enough to do in bending our heads to the storm, and in keeping our coats drawn closely about us for protection against its icy breath. But when we

had approached as near to the town as we dared upon horseback, and had tied our animals in a sheltered and secure place, we found a grateful warmth in the hard work of walking over the miry road. And then, as the blood began to flow more freely in our veins, and our stiffened muscles relaxed, we talked a little now and again.

“Say, Pokey,” my companion asked in one of those times; “how do you feel when you’re disappointed in a man? Does it hurt?”

“Yes,” I answered briefly, speaking from sad experience which was fresh upon my mind.

“It hurts me, too,” he said. “I always like to think well of folks, as long as they give me half a chance. It’s lots the best way, don’t you know it? But it certainly goes against me to run across such fellows as some of them mangy curs back in Lawrence. A Blue Lodge wouldn’t have done a trick like that. They’re cowards, I know, over in Missouri, but they’re a different kind of cowards. They’d fight the best they knew how, anyway; though that ain’t much. Look at that young preacher, for

one,—him that tried to scare the captain the other day. I've always expected a preacher, no matter who he was, to take all kinds of chances in this sort of a game. Mebbe that's because I hain't known many preachers. A critter like him makes a pretty picture, don't he? when he stands beside a man like old Brown."

Then, partly by way of answer, and partly as a means of beguiling the slow minutes, I told him what I knew of Blinky Meade, and of what he had been to me in the olden time, when we were boys together. Archy listened attentively until I had finished my story.

"Say, I didn't want to make you feel bad," he said then. "I reckon I oughtn't to have said that about him."

Before I could find words for disclaiming the wish to champion Blinky's weakness, I heard the sound of horse's hoofs splashing and floundering in the road behind us. I passed to Archy a quick warning, and we stepped out to the side of the road. There was now ample justification for such precaution, for we were drawing very near to Franklin, and the light reflected from the

low clouds showed us the roadway and the objects in our course,—everything appearing blurred and shadowy of outline, yet distinct enough to warn us that we too might be seen. We stood against a dark background of leafless bushes, waiting in silence until the horseman should pass us. We knew by the sound that there was but one, and we judged from his incautious manner of travelling that he was a friend of the invaders, or perhaps one of them, and not afraid of discovery. I thought that he must have ridden far, for his horse appeared to be badly jaded, and needed constant urging by whip and spur. All this would not have been cause for remark; but when the rider was nearly abreast of us he broke into a petulant but choicely worded complaint of the horse's lagging, and of his own discomfort. The voice seemed very familiar. Archy noticed this also, and spoke to me under his breath:

"Who's that? Somebody from Lawrence! Who do you reckon would be comin' down here? Say, I'm goin' to see who it is!" And despite my whispered protest, he crept forward warily from our shelter, standing as near to the center of the road as

he dared, to catch sight of the dim-lit face. He stood motionless until the traveller had gone past and his impatient words were softened by distance into a muttered growl.

“Pokey;” Archy called then, as I went out to join him; “Who do you think it was? It was the preacher!”

“Not Blinky Meade?” I asked.

“Blinky!” Archy echoed. “Blinky! It was him, all right; I saw him fair and square, an’ no mistake. What in the world is he doin’, comin’ down to Franklin?”

But that was more than I could guess. Surely there could be no public mission so urgent as to demand that a messenger should travel in such wise, and on such a night; and Blinky Meade I knew to be the most unlikely man to thus immolate himself for the general good. The mere fact of its being he was sufficient cause for thinking his purpose a purely personal one.

“I give it up, Archy,” I said. “Come; let’s go on, and maybe we’ll find out his errand.”

The peace compromise, and the raw discomfort of the winter night had leagued themselves together for withdrawing the

pickets theretofore posted on regular duty. In the outskirts of the little town all was dark; for the Free Soil citizens were keeping in as close seclusion as they could, avoiding all chance of meeting with the rowdy horde, while the sympathizers of the invaders were hanging about the large camps maintained by the tramp-army, drinking of the liquor that had been flowing so freely. We had no difficulty in working our way well into the heart of the town. When we were so near to the Missouri encampment that we could distinctly hear the tumult of their rioting, we avoided the thoroughfares, and slunk through alleyways and through vacant lots and wooded places, drawing nearer, little by little, to the wild vortex of drunken brawling which marked the last uncomfortable days of that mimic campaign. We were protected by a thick growth of timber when we came within sight of the main camp. It was the merest child's-play, after all, to keep ourselves in hiding while we observed everything that went forward.

It was a sorry and bedraggled picture that lay before us. The cold rains had fallen with distressful frequency within the few

days preceding the compromise, until men, wagons and food were pitilessly drenched, and the hot blood of those doughty braggarts, which had been boiling with eagerness for battle, was now reduced to such low point of temperature as showed itself in fierce outbreaks of passionate bad temper in each man toward his fellows. They had sought to reduce their discomfort by the use of liberal potations of raw whisky; but that had only served to stir to greater depths the springs of their ill nature. They had missed their hoped-for fight with us, and they were making up for the loss by fighting valiantly among themselves. The less hardy members of the expedition,—or perhaps they were only the less drunken,—had returned homeward even before the time of Governor Shannon's intervention. The lot of those who remained was hard, though their leaders did their best to maintain some outward show of bravery, stimulating and exciting the chilling spirit of the mob by a continued display of the fireworks of passionate oratory.

Such an exhibition was in progress when we first looked from our hiding place among

the trees. A great bonfire of logs had been kindled in the open, and was blazing with such vigour as to defy the rain, its glow throwing upon the broad picture myriad eerie effects of high light and dense shadow. Near to the fire stood two small cannon, dripping with moisture at muzzle and breech, which turned into impotence their threatening aspect. Covered wagons were drawn near together in long rows, and some of the canvas wagon-tops had been made into small shelter-tents around the fire. In every possible place of protection the men were clustered thickly, joining their voices in a general chorus of unavailing protest and complaint. Upon the rear step of one of the wagons a rain-soaked orator was holding forth with a fierce array of words,—words that lacked all heart and sentiment,—that lacked everything save bitterness of feeling toward the hated Free Soilers. The attention given to the speaker was wavering and discourteous; for the host was in such condition that mere words could have little effect. Very few of the men would venture from their shelter; they preferred to listen, if they listened at all, from the posts of com-

parative comfort under the canvas. Sometimes the voice of the speaker would be wholly drowned by the rising tide of intoxicated clamor and quarrelling.

CHAPTER XVII

A BETRAYAL AND A RESCUE

THE fulminating oration was brought to a sudden end. From some place in the dim background a shrill cheer arose over the general medley of sounds, and a half-dozen of men hurried forward into the circle of the firelight, crowding and jostling one another, and talking loudly. They seemed to have their interest centered upon one of their number, whom they urged into a place of prominence at their head. Straining my eyes in the dancing uncertain light, I saw that he was Blinky Meade. The long coat that he wore was spattered and clogged with mud, and every thread of his clothing was dripping wet; but his face was flushed, and his manner, as he talked with his companions, was impetuous and eager.

When the little company had reached the speaker's wagon, Blinky's companions left him and hurried about among the wagons and tents, from each of which there issued a

noisy group of men who clustered around Blinky, screaming and shouting as though they sought to do him some rude honour. His mentors soon returned to his side, and lifted him to a place upon the wagon-step which did duty as a rostrum, while the assemblage raised a boisterous demand for a speech. And Blinky showed no hesitation in yielding to their wish.

“Men!” he began in his solemnly impressive pulpit manner, as though he thought himself teaching a Godly lesson. “Men! Your leaders have known me in the past, and who I am is not unknown to some of the lowlier among you. I have been called upon to perform a delicate and trying duty in your behalf, and I have had to choose a trying means of coming down to make my report to your worthy leaders, so that they might judge whether I have performed my duty to their satisfaction. And now I want to say a few words in the hearing of yourselves, who are the sinews of this contest for our sacred liberties!” He got no further then, for a mighty cheer went up from the general throat, and it was a long time before such

order was restored as to allow of his continuing.

"Hear that!" Archy whispered hoarsely in my ear. "Good God! An' that's him that talked to old Brown!" The rest of his whispering was very forceful, formed of words made upon the border; but it can have no place here; it was the only speech I ever heard from him which might not be repeated at large.

We could hear little of what followed from Blinky's lips, so tumultuous was the clamor. I cannot tell what I thought. I knew Blinky so well that I could hardly have justified a hope of finding him better or manlier than he had shown himself to be; and yet I have always been weak enough to hope strongly that good will come uppermost in a man, if it has but fair chance. It was not that I disliked having him allied with those who in their turn were allied with wrong. I could freely have allowed him his own choice of opinions, and should have thought none the less of him because those opinions disagreed with my own. I would have had him be honest. I did not believe that his present course was an honest one;

politic it was, rather, born of a faint-hearted regard for the force of numbers, and of fear for the future. And as I knew that, in that moment all my old love for him died down within me.

But I had little time then for dwelling upon my disappointment. While he was speaking, suddenly there issued from one of the tents near by a new figure, at sight of whom Archy and I involuntarily started forward. He made a most melancholy spectacle. He was dishevelled and smoke-grimed, as though his person had received complete neglect during the eventful fortnight. His hair and beard were unkempt and matted, and mud was thick upon him, as though he had made his nightly bed in the soft ooze. With most men those things would have served as disfigurements and disguises; but with him they seemed to render recognition easier, accenting every feature of his low and vile aspect.

“Oh, Lord!” Archy groaned in hopeless misery. “It’s Dad! Look at him! He’s drunk! He’s got pretty low down, ain’t he? I’ve never seen him drunk before, not in all my life.” But there could be no doubt of

his drunkenness: his steps were reeling, his feet slipping helplessly beneath him upon the soft earth, and he grasped wildly at everything within reach that promised a secure hold. When he stood upon the outer edge of the noisy company, he sought to push himself into the heart of the dense mass; but he could not; he had to content himself with clinging for support to those who considerably allowed him a hold of arm or clothing. Whether he had heard something of Blinky Meade's discourse, or whether he formed his drunken judgment upon the attitude of those who were in better position to hear, we could not tell; but he raised his maudlin voice in a hoarse shout of approval:

"Good for you, young fellow! Death and hell-fire for the Abolitionists! That's what I say! You talk, an' I'll shoot!" His frenzied outburst rose high above the din, and he waved a pistol threateningly above his head, until some one took it from him. Blinky's eyes were turned toward him, while the speech was stopped for a moment. The crowd seemed intolerant of the interruption. A few of those who stood near the old man took hold of him and tried to urge him to go

away; but he strongly refused, striking out aimlessly with clenched fists. Then, while I was deeply intent upon the unlovely sight. I heard that Archy gave a sharp gasp, and he clutched fiercely at my arm.

“Look!” he cried. “There’s Mammy!” And when I looked as he pointed, there she was in truth, coming from the tent whence her husband had escaped. Her face, which I remembered as being so full of a dumb warrant for compassion, was now deeply seamed with the marks of suffering, tense and white. She was dressed as on the day I had first seen her, in poor black; but her head was without the protection of her bonnet, exposed to the chilling rain. She seemed to have just awakened from sleep; her eyes were heavy and haggard, and she looked about her in a bewildered and anxious way, as though in quest of something she had missed on waking.

“Archy! What can be the matter?” I asked. “This is no place for a woman. What is she doing here?”

“What’s she doin’?” he returned fiercely. “What do you reckon she’s doin’? She’s lookin’ after that worthless old hellyon over

there; that's what she's doin'." And so it proved; for in a few moments her wandering eyes found the abject figure, tottering helplessly on the edge of the shrill-yelling concourse. He was receiving no attention, for Blinky's interrupted speech had been resumed and was better worth attention than a drunken brother in wretchedness. When she saw him she made her way quickly to his side, laying her hands upon his arm, and trying to persuade him to go away with her. In his crazed mood he was rebellious, and struggled as well as he could against her detaining grasp; but his strength was at low ebb; little by little she half forced and half coaxed him toward their tent, supporting his reeling weight upon her slight shoulders.

Archy broke into a fierce oath and stepped out of the shadows where we were concealed, I at his side, to be ready in case of need. And the need speedily arose; for the old man's besotted mind resented his wife's interference with his liberty, and as they approached their tent his struggles grew stronger, so that the poor little woman had all she could do in keeping him and herself upright. At last he wrenched his arm from her grasp,

pushing her rudely away, crying out with brute impatience of restraint. The effort made him totter; but he recovered himself, and when she came toward him again, holding out her hands in a gesture of pleading, he raised his heavy hand and struck her upon the uncovered head, and she fell backward, her head striking against a wheel of one of the wagons.

What followed after that seems clear enough in my memory, until I try to tell of it; then I find that the details are clouded and uncertain, like the details of a dream. I know that Archy and I leaped forward, as though moved by one impulse, caring nothing where we were going,—caring only for the pitiful figure lying quietly where it had fallen. And if the old man thought about the matter afterward, it must have seemed very dreamlike to him, too; for in an instant after he had struck the cowardly blow, and while he still stood looking down upon the huddled heap that was his wife, and trying to gather his dazed wits together, he was confronted by the towering figure of his son, whose every muscle was rigid with righteous rage, and whose face was ablaze with long

pent-up hatred. The old man started back, his mud-fouled face full of a sudden terror. Before he had time to think of protecting himself, even if that had been possible, Archy's mighty hands had laid hold of him, had lifted him, struggling helplessly, into the air, and had dashed him upon the ground, where he lay motionless. Then very tenderly, though with all haste, Archy raised the body of his mother in his arms, holding her tight against his breast, and we ran back to the shelter of the trees, going rapidly northward by the path we had travelled a half hour before.

How it happened I cannot say. A fight may have been no unusual sight there. Perhaps we were not seen. The enchantment of Blinky Meade's sounding words may have been a godsend to us, after all, holding the crowd rapt. Certainly if we were seen we must have been thought members of the camp; for had those drink-maddened men suspected that we were interlopers from the hated Lawrence, we could not have escaped as we did. But when we had run for a little distance through the woodland, and paused for a moment to listen for sounds of pursuit,

we heard nothing more than the usual noises—the hum of rough voices, pierced by occasional shriller outbursts of cheering to mark one of Blinky's telling sentences.

Archy fell against me, panting and trembling violently; though that could not have been from physical exertion. I was not in much better plight; for so does the relaxation after strong excitement work upon a man.

"Thank God A'mighty—we come!" Archy gasped. "Oh—if we hadn't come!"

But our helpless estate did not long continue. Too much depended upon our keeping our wits about us, and our muscles strung for action. I would have taken Archy's burden upon myself for a time, but he would not suffer me to do it.

"You keep a watch for horses," he said. "Ours are too far away. Horse-stealin' ain't good for the health around these parts, but we'll have to borrow a couple, if we can find 'em. Three miles is too far to carry her, an' walkin's too slow."

Horses were plentiful enough. I soon found a little band which had been tethered upon open land within the town, and I hastily selected the two that seemed best able

to bear us, and those we pressed into service, improvising bridles from the tether-ropes. Archy wrapped his mother as securely as he could in his outer coat, and when we were mounted his arms were wholly occupied with holding her; so I led his horse beside my own, and in that fashion we rode until we reached the place where our own animals were secreted. Then we mounted, turning the others adrift to find their way back to their owners as best they could.

CHAPTER XVIII

A REUNION AND A SEPARATION

ALTHOUGH there was great need for haste, as a means to safety for ourselves, there was still greater need for travelling easily, as a means to the comfort of our charge. She had given no sign of conscious life since Archy lifted her in his arms, though her heart was still beating. Until we should reach a surgeon, we could know nothing of the hurt she had suffered; but to ride hard might do her a still greater hurt. So while Archy did his best to keep her at ease in his arms, I made the best speed I dared with the horses.

Thus we travelled for two slow hours. It must then have been past midnight; we could only guess at the time. There had been nothing to relieve the terrible suspense, save that once, when Archy tried to shift the inert weight of the body in his embrace, to give a little change to his strained and stiffened muscles, we heard a feeble moan escape the

pallid lips; and then again Archy breathed a fervent and honest "Thank God!" Even a moan of suffering may be a pleasant sound sometimes.

We had gone perhaps two-thirds of the way from Franklin to Lawrence when for the second time that night I heard the disquieting sound of a horse's approach from our rear. And this time also the sound betrayed the fact that he who approached was riding alone. We had not much to fear; which was very fortunate, for we were in a narrow part of the road where we could not have escaped, however formidable the appearance of an attack. I drew my pistol and held it ready for use in my hand, for safety against surprise; and when the horseman had come so near that I could distinguish his form clearly, I called to him to halt. The demand must have come unexpectedly. The stranger drew rein so sharply that he pulled his beast almost upon its haunches, and ere it had quite recovered its feet, a pistol flashed spitefully in the rider's hand, and my broad hat flew from my head, falling somewhere in the dark road.

That was not a time for deliberate thought.

On the instant, my pistol answered his, and I saw him fall heavily from his saddle, and heard him strike the mud of the road, while his terrified horse wheeled about and went flying back toward Franklin. Never before had I used a weapon against a man: I was seized with a cold chill of fear,—which was not very seemly, perhaps, and which may not be explained to those who have not endured such a moment for themselves. My first impulse was for wild flight; but Archy quieted my quaking heart.

“Get down an’ look after him! What are you settin’ there for? He’s lyin’ still enough: there’s nothin’ to be afraid of. Get down!”

I obeyed in a dazed mechanical way. The fallen man lay at full length in the mire, his face upturned, and near the middle of his broad white forehead was the mark of my bullet. The glance that showed me that mark showed me also that the dead man was Blinky Meade. To this time, in those night hours when sleep is delayed, I can see that face of ghastly whiteness, stained with the little ooze of blood from the round bullet-wound.

I spoke to Archy calmly,—a very unnatural calm,—telling him who the man was, and that he was quite dead. There was nothing for me to do but to drag the body to the roadside and leave it for after-care. We must go on with our living burden; we could not take the dead body with us; our horses were already overladen. And there we left him, lying upon his back in the mud;—Blinky Meade, the brown-eyed boy who had sat with me under the trees in the asylum yard, eating my apples; Blinky Meade, the strange little fellow who had been used to see visions and interpret them to me; Blinky Meade, who as a man had thought to make a proud place for himself in a proud world. I wondered whether his family of angels had at last become real to him and would care for him. Since that wild night I have never of my own will killed any living creature.

Archy's mind was not concerned with the dead. "Say!" he said with sudden resolution as we took up our interrupted ride; "we'll have to stop at the next house. It's safe enough now, likely, an' we'll save time for her by doin' it. We're gettin' pretty near to Lawrence; they're likely to be friends

along here, an' we can get somebody to ride ahead an' fetch a doctor; then she won't have to stand any more of this infernal joggling."

We came to a house before long. It was darkened, but in answer to my persistent shouts a cautious light soon appeared, and we learned that we had found friends. We carried the still unconscious body into the house, where the women took it under their care; and a young man, mounted upon a fresh horse, started in hot haste for Lawrence, to summon a surgeon and to bear news to John Brown of what had occurred. This last was by Archy's suggestion.

"Brown 'll know what it means," he said to me. "If—if Dad ain't—if he comes around all right, so as to be able to talk, some of them fellows'll follow us this morning. They'll be along most any time. Brown 'll know that, an' he'll know what to do. He won't leave us alone. You'll see!" Truly his was a wise head, his wit matched to every emergency. Never did I know it to fail him; though that seemed an unlikely thing, judging him by appearances.

Matched to all emergencies? To all save one. For when his mother had been re-

lieved of her cold drenched clothing and laid in bed, and Archy went to her bedside, there was an emergency beyond his resources. He called to me that I should join him, and when I went in he seemed in sore need of me, for he grasped at my hand like a frightened child, and clung to it as though for support.

"You stay here with me, Pardner," he said. "I can't bear this kind of thing, by myself. Please don't go away."

It was a trial to unnerve the strongest. The wan worn face lying upon the pillow before us seemed hardly mortal, so frail it was, so overshadowed by a long life full of patient suffering, and so terribly pathetic in its almost lifeless lethargy. The pallid light of our one poor candle cast such strange shadows upon the thin features, while our own shadows upon the wall were so vast and burly.

"Oh!" the poor son groaned. "My God! I wish she'd wake up! Don't she look awful?"

But she was a long time in rising to life's surface. Sometimes she would stir uneasily and her pale lips would move, but no sound

came from them. For an unmeasured time we sat, one upon either side of the bed, hardly speaking a word, but waiting for the unknown issue.

At last, when I had almost abandoned expecting it, her sunken eyes came open with a start, as though a sharp sound had aroused her from heavy sleep. Her glance went wildly around the unfamiliar room, to rest at last upon my face; but she seemed to get no comfort from looking at me, and her eyes were taking on a dull fixed stare when I beckoned to Archy.

“Speak to her; quick!” I urged; and he bent over, calling softly, “Mammy! Dear old Mammy! Here’s your big baby come back.”

No magic so strong as the voice of a loved one, whose softest tone can reach to the greatest depths of the valley of the shadow of death. So did his voice recall her.

“Archy!” she breathed, and her head was pillow'd upon his broad breast, her poor thin hands clinging to his great neck, while his cheek was laid fondly upon her hair. “You’ve been a weary long time comin’,

deary," she crooned. "I thought you'd forgotten old Mammy!"

He could not speak. Words were sunk into the depths of his suffering soul. He could only cling to her, straining her to his side. But after a little silence, she appeared to find memory awakening, for she drew away from him, looking at him with vague doubt; then looking around the room in quest of something she could not see. "Where is—he?" she asked weakly.

"Dad?" Archy answered with brave cheerfulness. "Oh, he's all right, Mammy; don't you worry. He'll come pokin' along pretty soon. You just lie still." And that she was content to do for the present, though I could see that little by little her scattered consciousness returned to her.

"Archy," she said at last; "nothin' has—happened to him?"

"Everything's all right, Mammy," he repeated; and in her weakened state that was enough to soothe her for a little while. But restless phantoms seemed to rise and haunt her. Slowly, again and again, while she lay against his breast, a mist would settle over her eyes, growing deeper, until she would

stir uneasily, striving to cast it off, as one struggles against the overpowering spell of a drowsy drug.

And a mighty drug was finding its way into her blood;—the mightiest that ever was. By and by she seemed to realize this, for with all her little strength she raised herself in bed, and free from Archy's arms, and sat looking fixedly at him; then with a helpless wild cry she threw herself upon him, hiding her face. "My baby! I thank the kind God I have found you before I die. I must tell you now."

He tried with his gentlest caresses to restore her to quiet; but she stopped him, holding his hands locked fast in her own. "Listen!" she cried. "I'll soon be gone, deary; I know it. Don't talk; you must listen! It's about—your little brother."

His eyes were imploring me for aid; but I could give him none. "There, there; don't talk so, Mammy," he pleaded. "Say, don't you remember Pokey, over there? He's been mighty good to me. You remember him, don't you?—the fellow that took me in his wagon?" Briefly she glanced at me,

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stretching toward me one cold hand, which I clasped and held fast until the end.

“No!” she said sharply; “you must listen to me! You must know! I have never told you; but I must tell you now.”

And then, while life ebbed slowly from her, she told him what she sought to tell,—speaking not all at once and smoothly, but with broken ragged sentences, and gasping sometimes for breath to form the next word;—told what I have told in the beginning of this story, of the day when I awoke from babyhood, a desolate waif before the gates of the asylum. While she talked I listened with dry lips parted, with heart near bursting, with the blood roaring in my ears. My thoughts were beyond all power of telling.

“Archy, my baby!” she breathed at last very faintly; “we were so poor, so starved, and it seemed best. Oh, I can’t tell you! And then, when we were no longer hungry, —I wasn’t sure—Dear Archy, I didn’t try to find him. I hoped he would grow to be a good man, and I wanted to save him from—his father, as I would have saved you, if I could. Oh, my children, my children!”

That was the last. Her strength failed

her utterly, and she sank back shivering upon her pillow.

“Mother! My Mother!” I cried from my knees by the bedside. “Here I am! Look at me! I am your son!”

Did she hear me? Stronger than any other of my hopes in this life has been the hope that she did hear me, and that she understood. I have tried to think that her dear hand, as I bent my throbbing forehead upon it, gave to my own hand a little answering pressure; but it may have been only the pulseless rigour of death. When I found the strength to draw myself up to gaze into her face, I saw that the patient gray eyes were already looking upon other scenes than those of this troubled earth.

And there, while the feeble light of the candle was drowning in the broader light of the gray dawn, Archy and I, kneeling, looked across the body of our peaceful dead into one another’s eyes, and the lips of each formed the sacred word, Brother.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS

LIFE is very strange,—a deep and wonderful puzzle, past all the power of our poor wits to solve. At the best, we must take so many things for granted; believing, if we can, that our destiny is formed according to God's clear inevitable sight. We think all would be so easy if our days moved forward with smoothness and certainty to an end always in our view, as we foolishly dream they might move had we our own will. I have sometimes rebelled bitterly against my utter helplessness and blindness, and have longed to shape things for myself, thinking how strong and sure my life must then be; and sometimes I have been glad that I must walk with all humankind by hidden paths. But it is a test of strength greater than mine to be able to look with calm fortitude into the face of each new day and circumstance and to say to each, God's will be done concerning you. Sometimes God speaks to men out of

the whirlwind; sometimes He says to the tempest, Peace, be still. I like to believe that if we listen we shall not fail to hear His voice, and shall find that His word is always sweet and just.

She my dead mother, and he my living brother;—yes, and that other my father! I could not realize these things; my understanding was obscured by a gloomy fog of doubt. I hid my face in the coverlet of the bed where the body of my mother lay, and was lost in the mazes of wonder and despair. By and by I felt a light touch upon my shoulder, and found that Archy was kneeling by my side. He was crying, tears of mingled holy sorrow and deep joy shining in his eyes and upon his cheeks, he making no trial to check or hide them.

“Brother Pokey!” he said softly. “It’s just you and me now. We’ll have to be a heap to each other, won’t we?” With hands clasped and with lips locked by awed silence, we sat together for a long time, while the wintry day broadened. I do not remember what we said, or if we spoke at all. There was no need that we should speak. There come times in life when speech seems only

dumb show;—when the clasp of a faithful hand or the glance of true eyes is all we ask. Time had no claim upon us as we knelt; time seemed suspended in the vast duration of eternity, save that the gray of dawn was slowly yielding place to white day.

After a long time I asked, “What shall we do, Archy?”

“I’ve been thinking about that,” my brother answered me. “I don’t know as there’s anything to do now, but bury her. You and me can do that. She’d like to have us, I know, just by ourselves, and we’d rather do it, wouldn’t we? I wouldn’t want to take her away from here; would you? I feel like this place is best, right here where we’ve all found each other. Don’t you feel that?”

“Yes,” I said; and we arose and set about the simple duties of preparing the poor body for its grave.

While we were thus busied, there was a sudden commotion of shouts and quick footsteps in the yard without. The door of our room was opened hastily, though with thoughtful quiet, and there entered the young man who had been our messenger to

Lawrence. When he saw the truth, his ruddy face bore honest compassion; but his present errand would brook no delay of telling.

"They're coming!" he cried. "There's a good many of 'em, not more than a mile away, and they're riding as hard as they can. I saw 'em from the last hill, as I came down. What do you want to do?"

We looked at one another, and I saw that Archy had shaken himself free from his softer mood and that his thoughts were moving with certainty.

"Do you want to hide?" the boy asked. "There's a good place in the ravine out back of the barn-yard, where they'll never find you before Brown gets here with his men. He's coming, right away. He had a dozen of his fellows saddling up when I left Lawrence. Or you might ride on up toward Lawrence, and meet him coming down. But you'll have to hurry, if that's what you want to do. There's no time to waste thinking about it."

Archy shook his head in answer to the boy's suggestion. "No," he said. "We'll stay here. We ain't goin' to leave *her*, are

we, Pokey? But we don't want to mix you folks up in our fight, if we can help it. Pokey, where's your pistol?"

My heavy revolver was belted to my side. Archy drew his own weapon from the pocket of the coat which had been wrapped about our mother.

"We're all right!" he cried with a light mirthless laugh of nervous excitement. "Come on; let's go out. You folks keep inside, out of sight from the road. They won't be likely to bother you. It's me they want."

Together we left the house and walked down to the roadside. There was abundant shelter amongst the trees and behind the rude frontier fence, and there we crouched for a time, peering down the road, waiting for the advance of the party from Franklin.

"It's just you and me now, Pokey," Archy repeated. "It's a funny mix-up, ain't it? I wish to God I knew what's goin' to happen. No, I don't, either. I'm ready for anything now; but I mightn't be ready if I knew what's comin'. Do you reckon it'll be both of us? If it's got to be one, I hope it'll be both; don't you?" But I thought of Eliza-

beth, and my thoughts choked my answer to his question. In that brief moment of self-inquiry, I found that life was still very sweet and dear to me.

Not a very long time passed before we heard the party approaching, so tell-tale was the muddy road; and then they appeared in sight,—a score of men, bedraggled and wretched, but grimly threatening in aspect, with rifles slung across their saddles, and with smaller arms showing plentifully in each man's belt. They were riding warily, knowing that they were near to Lawrence and in a dangerous neighborhood; though they seemed not to suspect that we were so close at hand,

As they drew nearer, Archy clutched my wrist fiercely. "There's Dad, right square in front!" he cried. His voice was tense as steel. "Pokey, you've got to keep your hands down till I tell you. It's my first shot!" All his wild instincts had possession of him, and I found myself powerless, though I tried to speak with rational calm.

"Keep still!" I urged. "They don't expect to find us here. Let them go past. They'll go on up the road and meet Brown's

party. It would be madness to expose ourselves here." But he did not seem to comprehend.

"Remember, now; it's my first shot! Thank God! Oh, Dad, Dad; I've got a lot to settle with you! Hands down, Pokey. You got the preacher; it's my turn now." He laid his pistol against a rail of the fence, glancing hungrily along its barrel.

"Archy!" I pleaded. "Not that way!"

"Hush!" he said. "Don't you be afraid. I'm goin' to fight fair. I never was much of a sneak, and I ain't goin' to sneak now."

The horsemen were so near us that Archy's last words were spoken almost in a whisper. Then, before I could guess what he was about, he arose, vaulted over the fence into the open road, and stood in full view of all.

The old man drew rein sharply, involuntarily dropping his hand to grasp the pistol which hung in its holster. He was trembling with an ague of sudden fright; but Archy's hand, as it swung its weapon aloft and dropped the barrel to the level of the old man's breast, was rigid as the brown earth.

Truly we do walk by hidden paths. In

that supreme moment, while the bitter wrongs of his life surged in his heart, Archy proved himself a man. A sharp gasping oath escaped his drawn lips, and his pistol went whirling through the air, falling harmlessly a long way off.

"You shoot, Dad," he cried. "I'll be damned if I can!" Then he stood firmly awaiting what should befall him.

If I had been at all afraid, all fear left me at that. For fear, and every other base thing, departs from the heart of a man when he ceases to think of himself; and as I looked at my brother standing before me with his resolute face turned undaunted toward death, the echo of his heroic cry still in my ears, my every thought was of him. Before I knew it, I was over the fence and by his side, hoping to protect him, though not knowing how that might be accomplished in the face of so many enemies;—meaning to die with him, if nothing better offered.

The old man, our father,—how strange it seems to call so foul a creature by that beautiful name!—our father had at last worked his pistol loose from its confining holster, and he now held it in his uplifted hand,

while he gloated upon the presence of the defenseless man before him, and upon the nearness of his revenge. He did not deign to look at me; his eyes were wholly concerned with Archy. He was quivering with the exultation which thrills a man when he nears the accomplishment of a fixed purpose, good or bad. When he spoke, his voice was vibrant with the same passion,

“You brat of the devil! I hoped heaven would give me this chance before hell yawned to claim you!” His vile blasphemies choked his throat and strangled themselves from further utterance. With a fierce gesture he lowered his weapon, taking as careful aim as he could with his nerveless hand. I threw myself before Archy, holding up my arms to make the old man look at me.

“Wait!” I cried. “Listen to me first; then shoot if you will.”

When he saw who I was:—“You too!” he bellowed in fury. “Stand aside! I’ll kill him first, and you next. Get out of the way!”

“Listen!” I shouted strenuously. “You must listen, father—father!—”

Ere I could say more, strong hands were laid upon my shoulders and I was swept helplessly aside. "Pokey," Archy said quietly; "don't stain your soul, callin' him *that!*"

A sudden commotion of panic seized upon those who had been idle onlookers, and a cry went up,—"Look out! There come the soldiers!" and with the panic fresh upon them those doughty warriors wheeled their horses about in the road and broke into ignominious disordered flight. Fled, all save one. The old man did not heed; perhaps he did not hear. He held his horse firmly in check; his levelled pistol flashed,—flashed once, twice, and Archy fell heavily against me.

"Dad! For God's sake!" he gasped. "Shoot straighter! You've killed—her; now kill me—quick!"

Something made the old man hear those low words. His face went white as death, his hand fell to his side, and he sank forward in his saddle.

"Killed—*her!*" he screamed. "Almighty God! Where is she?"

"Yonder," Archy answered, with life

sinking low in his voice, and I silently pointed toward the little house where our mother's body lay. With a groan the wretched man got from his horse and staggered up the pathway to the door, which he beat open and then vanished within.

Brown and his men were near. As I lifted Archy away to the side of the road and laid him gently down, they galloped up, Brown himself at the front, and beside him John Hale.

“Be quick!” was Brown’s imperative order. “What’s the meaning of this? Is the man dead?”

“God knows,” I answered sadly; for consciousness was gone from Archy’s face, and his head lay with a lifeless weight against my breast as I knelt beside him.

“Quick!” Brown thundered. “Tell me what it means. Who did it?”

The words leaped to my lips; but there they hung. I knew that if I spoke, justice would be swift and terrible. I thought of what was going forward within the house. She was my mother, and this was my brother clasped in my hungry arms, perhaps with life gone out of him. Yes, truly; but

that other was my father. With this wild tumult of thoughts and passions raging in my soul, the words that should betray the murderer would not be spoken. We are troubled over many things. The lightest cloud in summer skies will cast a shadow, and the recurring shadows fret us. But wild whirlwinds and devastating storms are not things of every day.

The riderless horse, left to take its own unhindered way, and brought to complete weariness by the hard forced journey, lingered near us in the road, pricking its ears with half-fright, yet heedless of flight. Some of Brown's men espied it.

"Whose horse is that?" Brown asked; and when I did not answer, he turned toward the house. "They can tell us something in there," he said to Hale. "Come with me." They rode toward the gate; but I arose and barred the way when they would have dismounted to enter.

"Gentlemen!" I cried with a firmness which surprised myself; "gentlemen, you must not go in there now. A woman has just died. To go in upon such an errand at this time would be heartless."

Brown's eyes were searching my face keenly. "Tell us who shot this man," he said, "and where he has gone. We want him. Our duty is with him, if he is alive, and not with dead women."

As I looked from one to the other of their stern faces, my answer was slow in coming, and was not very satisfactory to me when it came, for it was only a simulation of the truth. "I cannot tell you where he is," I said; "but you must not go into the house."

Hale spoke kindly. "I know this man," he said to Brown; and then to me: "Give me your word, Pokey, that he is not in the house, and we'll not go in."

In an instant my thoughts flashed back to the old days when I was a little child and sat by John Hale's side beneath the trees in the asylum yard, listening while he taught me to speak the truth. I set my back against the closed gate, holding my pistol ready in my hand.

"No," I said; "I will not tell you that. But you shall not go in. I will kill you first; or you must kill me. I have found my father, Hale, and I will not give him up to you."

But such argument could avail nothing

against Brown's stern faith, which regarded no earthly ties,—which regarded neither death nor life. Without a word he gave his bridle-rein to Hale, then swung himself to the ground and came toward me, his compelling eyes fixing mine, his lips set grimly. He was unarmed; his weapons he had left in their pockets on his saddle. Yet I could not fire; my finger upon the trigger was impotent. When he was at arm's-length from me, he held out his hand.

"Give me that pistol," he said in the tone of a master of men; and he took it from my unresisting grasp. "You would better look after the needs of that wounded man. Some of my men will help you." Then, at his command, three or four of the others followed him to the house.

They were too late to find him whom they sought. He had escaped from the house and had entered the deep ravine at the rear of the barn-yard. When this was discovered, Brown summoned all his little band for pursuit. I do not know whether their quest was successful; for none ever offered to tell me, and I have never dared to ask.

CHAPTER XX

PEACE

AND now I draw near to the end; and the end is like a long deep breath of peace and quiet after ardent strife. I am glad that it is so. I have always liked to think that the end of all our mortal struggle and endeavour will come to us softly, tenderly,—not as a shrill shout of death swallowed up in victory, but as the cool and calm of a summer night after sultry day. Such seems a fitting end for my story.

When the bitterness of our conflict was past, and when Brown's men were assembled for their return to Lawrence, I begged that they would dig the grave for my mother's body; and that they did, at a place which I chose within the sheltering woodland near by. Her burial was simple; but if God regards such things, I know it was acceptable to Him. I think that the memory of that hour must outlast my life itself. The picture is strongly before me now, with those

stern-lipped men standing uncovered about the grave, while John Brown lifted up his noble face toward heaven and prayed that we who lived might keep until the end our strength for doing our duty, and that we might at last find the sweet peace which had fallen upon the dead. It was very beautiful and very wonderful to me.

We had borne Archy into the house and laid him upon the bed made vacant by my mother's burial. When Brown left us with his men, there being nothing that he could do to aid us after that, he promised to send a surgeon; and the surgeon came in due time.

Archy was still alive, and his heart was going on somewhat with its labour. At first the surgeon would not even hint at hope,—perhaps with a jealous eye upon his reputation for prophecy; but as the slow hours passed and another night drew on toward morning, he ceased to talk of death alone, and began to speak half-willingly of chance for life. Through it all I did not once abandon determination that my brother should live. His mighty mold was in his favour, and as the hours grew into days, he seemed

to take a firm hold upon the desire to dwell yet a little longer with us who shared his mortality. He was for a long time in that state where a strong man may choose whichever path he will; and by and by he chose that which led him back to life.

I did not leave his bedside. That was our mutual wish. His grasp upon the tattered threads of vitality seemed to weaken when I was not within range of his faithful eyes. When he would fall wearily asleep, his last glance would be at me; and when he awoke, his eyes' first quest was for my face bending above him.

As he grew stronger, I saw that restlessness possessed him. He did his best to keep patient before me; but that hidden desire would arise in his eyes. When I saw that it persisted, and that his recovery was slower therefor, I made out to speak to him about it one day when we were alone.

“Archy, there’s something you want to say. What is it?”

He would have denied it at first; but that humour did not last. “Yes, there is, Pokey, I ain’t satisfied here. I want to get back

home. Seems like I can't stay here no longer."

"Oh, no; not yet," I said. "All our care would go for nothing, if we tried to move you now. You must keep quiet for a long time yet. The surgeon wouldn't hear to your going home."

"*He* don't know; neither do you, Pardner," Archy answered quietly. "It's something I don't dare tell you, neither, just yet. But it's got to be done, old man. I won't get well until it's over. I've been trying to wait, but I can't. Everything's come on me so quick and hard, it seems as if I ain't got strength to lie quiet and wait. I don't sleep much, thinkin' about it. You'll have to do it, Pokey. I would for you, if you wanted it."

"Can't you tell me what it is?" I asked. "Isn't it something that I could do for you?"

He laughed feebly. "No, I reckon not. You'd be too slow; and you wouldn't do it the way I want. It's something I've got to do for myself. I can't wait. Sometimes I'm afraid you wouldn't do it, even if I asked you. Then, besides, I *want* to do it myself."

My strongest promises for the future

would not soothe him. In some dim way I grasped at what he meant; and guessing that, I could not find word or argument against him. I promised him that I would speak to the surgeon.

In place of the urgent denial which I expected, the surgeon only puckered his heavy brows. "He's restless and uneasy," he said. "That's bad. He ought to be quiet. He's a big strong fellow, and his will's as strong as his body. I don't know; I won't say yes or no. Chances are about even, any way. You can do as you like."

That was equivalent to his saying yes. After that, Archy would not hear of further delay. There came soon a clear mild day in our favour, and we made up a bed in the bottom of a light wagon and set out upon our journey homeward.

Though we started in the early morning, night had fallen ere we reached our journey's end. But there was a full moon afloat in the cloudless sky, its soft light showing the broad prairie in all its wild winter beauty. When we came within sight of our little group of homely buildings, Archy made me stop the horses and raise his head from its pillow so

that he could catch a glimpse of the familiar picture.

“It looks good, don’t it?” he sighed. “When I went away, Pokey, I didn’t much care; but now I swear I’m glad to be alive. It’s worth a heap to me, gettin’ back here again.”

Despite his joy, he was very weak when we had borne him into the house and laid him upon his rude couch; nor did he rest through the night. He tossed and fretted, speaking impatiently of the long delaying of dawn.

“Unless you sleep, Archy, I shall be sorry we came back now. It wasn’t wise, I know. You must sleep,” I urged.

“Oh, shucks!” he said. “I don’t need sleep, old man. I’m rested for the rest of my life, if I never get to sleep again. Sleep ain’t what it’s cracked up to be. I’d rather stay awake and think.”

At the first appearance of weak daylight, I prepared his breakfast; but his new excitement would not permit him to eat, though to please me he toyed with his food for a time.

“Oh, take it away, Pardner,” he said in final abandonment of the pretense, “and then

come and sit down here beside me. I want to talk to you." When I had done as he said, he took my hand in his enfeebled grasp.

"There's been a lot of things settled since we went away from here, Pokey; ain't there?" he asked softly. "But there's one thing more that ain't settled yet, and I want to ask you about it." He lay still for a little time, stroking my hand with his own, his eyes never wandering from mine,—as though he sought a clue for the beginning of his speech.

"Pokey, you don't know how I feel about things. It 'most scares me sometimes, when I think how things have come out, and how I've got waked up. Suppose things hadn't happened just like they did; and then—But what's the use! They have happened; and that's enough, I reckon. It's enough for me, any way. But I've wondered sometimes what we're goin' to do with ourselves now. It won't do to just go along from one day to the next, like we used to. The days mean something now; don't they? and we've got to do something with 'em."

"Yes," I answered, smiling at his honest earnestness. "Life means something for us

now, and we ought to try to make the most of it. But I shouldn't worry. I like to believe that the providence that has waked us up will give us waking sight and strength. I don't believe we need be concerned."

"Yes, I guess that's so," he agreed. "But then, we've got to think about things for ourselves, too, as they come along; and there's one thing I can't get quite clear in my head. I can't help worryin' about it some, till it's straightened out. That's what I want to ask you about. Pokey, have you ever felt what love is,—love for a real good woman?"

I had divined what he would say. I felt my cheeks flush red and hot, though a chill seized upon my heart.

"I know what you mean, Archy," I said.

He fell again into that tense silence, while he groped for words. "It's funny," he said at last. "I've been wondering and wondering, and I can't quite make it out,—just what a man's love is, I mean. What do you think, Pokey?"

I had to turn my eyes away from his; but I am glad to remember that I spoke with full and perfect honesty in all that followed.

"I think there's nothing richer or sweeter

or truer in a good man's life, Archy, than his love. Nothing in his life seems to matter very much, save love and honor. All the other things that keep us so busy are very small in comparison. Love is the man's only passion that is wholly unselfish, at its best. The man's true love for a good woman will make his life strong and broad; and if she loves him, his strong broad life will be easy for him."

He had listened with straining eagerness. He breathed a long deep sigh. "Yes; that's about what I've thought, too. A man's right love is bound to be unselfish. But seems like most men look at it as if when they love a woman, there ain't nobody else on earth but just that one man and that one woman. That ain't the way it ought to be, of course. The man's love for the woman ain't *all*." Then he lay quite still upon his pillow for a time, closing his eyes wearily.

"Pokey, I ain't bein' quite fair with you," he said at last. "I didn't want to talk about love, by itself; I wanted to ask you about Eliz'beth. You'll tell me true, I know you will; won't you?"

"Yes, Archy," I answered, though my

voice seemed to come from a long way off. "What is it about Elizabeth?" I was resolved that I would tell the uttermost truth, if he asked me.

"Does she love you?" he questioned gently.

"I do not know. I am even afraid to hope so."

"Hope so?" he echoed. "But you'd like to hope so, wouldn't you, if you wasn't afraid?"

"Yes; I should like to hope so, if my fears would let me."

"Then you do love her, don't you?"

"Yes; I love her."

"As much as you love me, Pardner?"

"Yes, as much as I love you. I could not love any one more than that."

His fingers closed heavily upon mine, and a tear slipped across his cheek to the pillow. "That sounds good," he breathed. "But ain't you ever said anything to her, then? You ain't said anything to each other, so there's any understanding?"

"No," I answered, when I had thought for a moment. "No; there's nothing between us that we have ever spoken aloud. There is

nothing beyond what I have felt in my soul; and I have got but elusive comfort out of that."

"Do you think when a good man loves a good woman, and there's nothin' to keep him back, he ought to tell her?" he asked slowly.

It was after a sharp struggle that I spoke calmly. "Yes; he ought to tell her."

"If—if—" His eyes closed again, and when he opened them it was to say what I feared. "Pokey, it's no use. I want you to go and tell her to come here; will you? I've got to see her." And I went out to seek her and to do as he asked.

When she entered the cabin with me, she went quickly to the bedside and sank upon her knees, laying her hand upon his hot forehead. "Archy, Archy!" she said softly; and that seemed to give him peace. He looked at me directly, and I went out, closing the door after me.

I had faced death when death seemed something real, and I had not shrunk. But while I paced back and forth without the house, I could hardly summon the fortitude for facing life; for life must prove a phantasm and a mockery when I should be

brought to the necessity of crushing out the love which had become life's very essence. I knew better then than to feel empty compassionate sympathy for Archy, as for one who merited only pity for the hopelessness of his plight. I knew then that he was far more of a man than I. No doubt Elizabeth had found that out long ago, she being less blind than I; and I knew her to be one of those rare women who can value manhood at its real worth. It was a bitter struggle; but as my troubled thoughts filled the slow minutes of waiting, I made up my mind to let things be as they were shaping themselves. For my brother's sake I would do that;—yes, and for Elizabeth's sake, too. I loved them both, and perfect love must be able to bear even the supreme test of renunciation.

When this thought had become fixed in my heart, I tried to think calmly and clearly of the life before me. There would no doubt be many ways for filling in the days and years, if years should be mine. I wished that my mother might have lived. There was no reasonable hope that our border warfare was yet at an end; I would take my

place with the fighters, and might yet find chance for doing something worthy of a man. I even tried to persuade myself that I should find happiness in seeing the fruition of the happiness of those who were so dear to me, and that I might thereby be led to contentment; but that was an empty pretense, as I soon saw, being honest with myself. Happy contentment must choose its own paths when it comes to us; we cannot force it to tread ways of our making.

What passed in the cabin during those minutes I never knew. After a long time Elizabeth came to the door and beckoned me in. When I entered she was standing by the bedside, and tenderly stroking Archy's hair from his forehead. His eyes were shining with joy. I could not bring myself to the point of looking at her, though I stood across from her, taking Archy's hand in mine and trying to let him feel that my heart was right toward him.

"It's all right, old man," he said; and then upon quick impulse I looked at Elizabeth and saw that her cheeks were flushed crimson. Archy turned his glance to her face also, and he laughed in that old familiar boyish way.

"I can't help it, Eliz'beth," he cried gaily. "I never was much of a mummy. I can't keep still. This old clam Pokey wouldn't ever find out, without somebody to help him." He had clasped her wrist, and though she strove to withdraw it he held it firmly, with a new strength in his grasp. "No, you don't!" he said. "Oh, Eliz'beth; what's the use? Just us three!" Before I knew what he was about, he had brought the girl's hand to meet mine.

"There!" he cried gleefully. "That's the way it ought to be, when two people love each other. Don't mind me, Pokey; tell her. You know you've got to humour a sick man, and I want to hear you say it."

THE END







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